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MARIAMNE,

THE

Last of the Asmonean Princesses:

A HISTORICAL NOVEL

OF

PALESTINE.

BY

NATHANIEL OGLE, ESQ.

PART II.

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CHAPTER XIII.

Antony, after the capture of Samosata, had returned to Tarsus, where Cleopatra was to meet him. The galley which bore her up the Cydnus was adorned with the most laboured carving, and entirely covered with gold; the sails were of purple silk; the oars plated with silver, and moving in time to the music of the softest flutes. Beneath a canopy of cloth of gold reclined the wanton Cleopatra, attired in loose flowing drapery, which exposed her form, and gave her some resemblance to the Paphian goddess; beautiful boys, as Cupids, fanned her, and girls, as Nereids and Graces, attended on her. Perfumes and incense wafted their scents along the banks of the river, and filled the air with fragrant odours.

As soon as it was known that she approached, the people from every quarter flocked to gaze on the splendid pageant; and Antony was left in the court of justice, where he was presiding, with only his lictors and domestics. As soon as she landed, the triumvir sent to invite her; she declined, and summoned him: he came, and was entertained with so much magnificence, that he wondered at her wealth. The cabin of her galley was inlaid with mother of pearl and silver lace-work: on each compartment were sculptured and adorned with jewels the various vessels of the Nile; the water-deities of Egypt, with their different symbols; and views of numerous cities built on the banks of the sacred river. The bars of the lattices were formed of immense pieces of polished crystal. The table was of exquisite workmanship, and composed of ivory inwrought

with gold, and covered with one plate in imitation of an amethyst—(the Egyptian workmen, though celebrated for their skill in imitating every precious stone, had never excelled this specimen either in size or lustre) — the couches were of wrought ivory, covered with silk that vied in changing hues with the bosom of the dove. Every utensil was of gold, embellished with gems, excepting some of the cups, which were cut out of amethyst and crystal. The viands, fruits, and wines, were the most delicious that the earth could afford. When evening closed in, lamps of gold, studded with diamonds and other stones, burned naphtha, rendered odoriferous by Egyptian skill; while the jewels refracted the rays from their various-coloured surfaces.

Antony became enamoured of the Egyptian queen, who exerted all her wondrous powers of pleasing to captivate the willing victim. The third time he came to banquet with her, there were few with them, who soon, on different pretexts retired: before the last had left them, a messenger arrived with a letter from Herod; he delivered it and went away, accompanied by the last loitering guest. He hastily untied the letter, and uttered an exclamation of vengeance. Cleopatra approaching him gently, said —

"What so disturbs you? Let us leave this place for one where, unobserved, you may contemplate on this occurrence which has broken in upon our happiness."

She led him unresisting to her retiring cabin, which was like the shell of the paper nautilus. She seated herself near him, and again asked—

"What is it that thus troubles you? If a battle has been lost, Antony can soon redeem the loss; if any friend has proved false, he may find one more true, even in Cleopatra."

"I have this instant heard of one princess who has deceived me."

She feigned surprise, and said—

"One who could deceive the earthly symbol of Hercules? I can scarce believe you, Antony. Who is this perfidious fool? Let me see this fatal letter, which has so discomposed you."

She took it from his yielding hand; and having read it, placed it near him, and archly said—

"So Herod has outwitted you, and carried off the beauteous Asmonean!"

She looked at him, and seeing his lip curling, and portraying the anger rising in his bosom, continued—

"Why is Antony so jealous of this Ascalonite, who has received from him a crown, and taken from him his love?"

The triumvir found himself within her power; and though not pleased with her teasing jocularity, endeavoured to pass it off with more good humour than he felt.

"Methinks since I gave him a crown, he might have left me my love: now I will take away his crown, and leave him his love."

She fixed her speaking eyes on his, and asked—

"Were you at Strato's Tower during your progress through Judæa?"

He started, and replied—

"Where! where did you ask me if I had been?"

"At Strato's Tower, Antony."

"And what if I had been there?"

"Do not be angry with poor Cleopatra for asking you the question."

He gravely replied—

"You know more of my affairs than you should. That treacherous villain Aulenus must have told you this: I will cut off his head, and his master's too."

"Indeed, I never heard of such a man as Aulenus. How

long did you wander on the sea-girt shore, all lonely and disconsolate, after your love had left the tower?"

Antony was now both surprised and angry, and said with vehemence—

"By my head, Cleopatra, it is too bad to watch my steps thus, and then to beard me!"

She placed her hand in his, and gazing on him tenderly, continued—

"Sweet Antony, be not angry. I will not tell any one of the meeting at Strato's Tower. Forget her now she is married, and find another who will be more true."

"You are all alike; even Cleopatra herself would forget her love—"

The queen caught up his words, and continued—

"As the lady did to whom you gave your signet at Strato's Tower."

"Cleopatra," he exclaimed, "by Jupiter, you shall not leave this place until you tell me from whom you learnt all this! I will cut off Herod's head and crown."

"Alas, poor Herod! I learnt it from the woman to whom you said—"

"What?" hastily demanded the astonished triumvir.

"Who pulled your ear," replied the queen, archly smiling.

"By heavens I'll know—"

"To whom you said—"

Before she had finished her speech, Antony seized her hand, and exclaimed—

"Here's the signet-ring!"

"On the hand that pulled your ear," answered the queen with downcast eyes.

"No—I dream! you were not at Strato's Tower."

She bent her knee, and with feigned humility said—

"Can Antony forgive my cunning? Love is most

artful. You stole away my heart when you were in Syria with Gabinius. Herod was not guilty of imposing on you. I heard from a slave your intentions respecting Mariamne, and then I hated this Asmonean; and knowing how gladly she would try to captivate my Antony, I planned the scheme of meeting him at Strato's Tower, and left my kingdom for my love, in a dusky galley with a few attendants."

She held the hand of the astonished Antony, who could scarcely believe what he heard; but she told him so many little incidents that had occurred, and which they alone could know, that he raised and embraced her, and became more enamoured, because he believed that she really loved him.

The next day he wrote and congratulated Herod, but privately warned him not to repeat the affair of Strato's Tower. His letter was accompanied with a jewel of value and an increase of territory.

CHAPTER XIV.

The marriage of Mariamne was not immediately productive of the effect anticipated. Herod, on his reaching the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, found that great multitudes (it was the Sabbatic year) had assembled in the city, and being wrought on by prophetic declarations of divine assistance, and promises of rewards, were determined to support Antigonus, and defend the city against Herod and his ally Sosius with the Roman power.

The siege had been vigorously prosecuted, without any advantage on either side; when, on the fortieth day, an attack was made on the outer wall. Before sun-rise, the towers, containing engines for hurling stones and darts, scaling-ladders, and bridges to cast on the walls with soldiers, were wheeled towards the northern ramparts.

The morning rays shone on the Temple, lighted up the lofty towers of the battlements, and glittered on the vine and olive-covered hills beyond. As the sun rose above the heights, its level beams displayed the moving legions, the horse hastening to their stations, and the besieged within the city preparing to resist the attack.

The towers approached; stones and missile weapons were hurled from the engines, and flights of arrows winged against them: the battering rams were plied with vigour, though the engineers were repeatedly destroyed. At the moment when the wall was won, and Herod thought the city would be taken, three of the towers fell into the earth with a dreadful crash, for the foe had undermined them: bands of the enemy rushed into the mine and fired the dis-

abled towers, while their countrymen on the walls kept up an unceasing discharge of arrows. Herod now advanced with a chosen band; and while the besieged were continuing their operations against the burning towers, and those yet not overthrown, he approached, under cover of the smoke, the wall where the battering ram had beaten a partial breach, and rushing on, scaled the rampart; and being closely followed by his men, supported by another legion, made good his footing; and after a sanguinary conflict, was left in possession of the outer wall. The second wall was defended with equal valour, and won with greater difficulty. After a long siege of five months, during which the Jews mined beneath the enemy, and meeting with their countermines, fought them with unflinching courage in these subterranean passages, Herod determined to try and take the city by a general assault. His hopes of success were raised, as the besieged were weakened by famine and civil discord. The assault was made in the usual Roman manner; the whole line-wall, and every other accessible part, was attacked at once. Beams, stones, darts, javelins, barrels filled with burning oil and feathers, molten lead, and boiling grease, were hurled at and tumbled on the exasperated assailants in vain. They gained the upper city, fired the portico and outer buildings of the Temple, and dispersing spread carnage and dismay on every side; they spared neither age nor sex, and ravaged every place where booty was to be obtained; and would even have plundered and polluted the very sanctuary, if Herod had not, by entreaties and force, prevented them. He tried to stay the dreadful butchery of his subjects; but the soldiers, flushed with conquest, and eager to revenge the gallant resistance they had met with, were not to be kept back. He threatened Sosius, and told him that he would leave him the king of a desert, if his men were not restrained; but it was not until he promised

the avaricious general a great reward, and a sum to every man, that he called his legions from pillage and murder.

Antigonus came down from the citadel, threw himself at the feet of Sosius, and, with bitter lamentations, besought his mercy. The Roman ridiculed his cowardice, and ordered him to be chained, and borne away to prison.

Herod performed his promise to Sosius, paid the soldiers, and was left in possession of Jerusalem.

His first actions were similar to those committed by almost every monarch who has won a kingdom by conquest, or been restored by the courage and affections of others to a throne from which he had been expelled. The treasury was empty, and he had pecuniary obligations to fulfil. The precious metals belonging not only to the adherents of Antigonus, but to others, were seized on, and carried to his palace, or to the sanctuary. Forty of the chief leaders and members of the Sanhedrin were put to death, their property confiscated, and even their coffins searched, lest they should have buried with them any of their worldly goods. Besides those who suffered death, all the known followers of Antigonus were deprived of their lands, and reduced to a state of indigence and impotence. Sameas, who denounced him before the Sanhedrin, and Pollio, who had expressed the same opinions, were the only men of eminence who escaped.

This cruel and rapacious conduct rendered him odious in the eyes of the people, and made them mourn for Antigonus, and grieve that the Asmonean dynasty was destroyed by a stranger. When Herod ascertained that they still cherished a fond remembrance for the banished family, he was apprehensive that they might reject him, and replace them. At first, he hoped that his being allied to Mariamne might appease them; but he was mistaken. This

failure left him open to the silent but certain working of all the violent passions of his nature, without either religion or philosophy to check their progress, or restrain their violence, when his favourite objects were in danger. Duplicity was the only method by which his intentions were masked from common observation, while it permitted him to meditate and strike a surer blow. There are few so intensely wicked who do not stifle the whispers of conscience by false and sophistical reasoning and excuses before they commit a crime or willing sin, since the thrilling calls of that internal monitor are too penetrating to be resisted without offering some reply. Herod, finding the affections of the people still fixed on the regal race, wished that it was extinct. This wish soon increased to a latent hope, that, by some means, they might be swept away. When he thought of Antigonus, he remembered that he had endeavoured by treachery to cut him off, and had virtually murdered his brother Phasaëlus. The recollection of his death was followed by a train of ideas, which thus passed through his mind —

" I could forgive his attempt on my life, because he knew me to be his rival; but he slew my brother,—he, a prince and high-priest, who knew that the law he taught peremptorily declares, ' Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed!' Who are to enforce the laws of God? Those to whom He has given power. Am I not a king? one who was prophesied of by Menahem? My being a king according as he said, proves that he was truly inspired by God. Shall my first actions be in rebellion against His laws? No. Antigonus shed my brother's blood — maimed his kinsman Hyrcanus — leagued with the declared enemies of Judæa — and would, if it were in his power, hurl me from my throne. Since it would seem in-

vidious of me to condemn him publicly, and might offend Mariamne, that treasure of my soul, I will prompt Antony to do it, rather than the laws of God and reason be set at nought."

He considered deeply the means by which he should accomplish his purpose. On the following day, he ordered a splendid escort to be in readiness to carry despatches to Antony. Several horses were laden with silver and gold, and an officer of rank entrusted with the following epistle —

" Herod, king of Judæa, sends greeting to the imperator Antony. He who receives benefits should be mindful from whom they come. With the assistance of Sosius, I am established in my kingdom; and hearing that the supplies for carrying on the war have fallen short of your expectations, I send an humble present, for the purpose of supplying some of the deficiencies, and to prevent you from being straitened in your operations. Sosius sent to you, in bonds, the rebel and murderer Antigonus: that same man cut off the ears of his kinsman Hyrcanus, the high-priest of the Jews; a character and office which Pompey venerated, and which has ever been upheld. He has done even worse than this; for he treacherously caught Phasaëlus, when obeying your orders, and slew him, by pouring poison into his wounds. By the law of the Jews, ' whoso sheddeth man's blood must die the death.' It would seem like revenge in me, were I to require of him my brother's blood; but in you it would be justice, since he slew Phasaëlus, when sent by you to take charge of the affairs of Jerusalem. I entreat you, by our ancient friendship, by your well-known justice, and for the sake of example, not to keep this murderer to grace a triumph, but to let him die by his own law. He set the Roman power at nought, and accepted from the

Parthians the crown of Judæa, and then resisted your armies. Farewell."

As soon as the wreck and ruin, caused by the storming of Jerusalem, were somewhat repaired, Herod sent for Mariamne, hoping that her presence might tend to allay the discontent which existed among the people. On the arrival of the queen, she entered Jerusalem with great pomp: as she passed along, many blessed her; others asked aloud, how an Asmonean princess could marry an Ascalonite; some among the crowd wept, and bade her be an Esther to her people. At this she smiled in acquiescence; and the multitude raised a cry of joy, exclaiming — "She shall be our queen; we want no Ascalonite for a king: why did you marry him?" A loud voice from the crowd exclaimed —

"The princess married to save her people from war, and that we might till our land in peace; for she is a true Asmonean, and sitteth on the throne of her fathers. Bless the queen of Israel; bless her, all ye dwellers in Jerusalem!"

She turned to whence the voice proceeded, and perceived the noble Mazrah: a blush suffused her cheeks. The people, ever ready to support the beloved race, caught the words and the enthusiasm of the speaker, reiterating them with shouts and blessings.

Salome was in the train, and recognised the Essene.

Some days after Mariamne's arrival, Herod suddenly entered, apparently raging with anger, and vociferating —

"They have scourged him like a thief, and cut off his head like a common malefactor. What will crowned heads and royal blood next suffer? Curses on these Romans! they are more wanton in power than a fattened tiger with its prey."

Mariamne hastily approached him, and inquired —

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"What has happened? whom have they scourged and killed?"

"I scarce dare tell you."

"Tell me, Herod, have the cruel Parthians slain the good Hyrcanus?"

He assumed the look of one in anger, when telling what had surprised him and excited his wrath; then vehemently exclaimed—

"The villain Antony scourged, then publicly executed Antigonus!"

Mariamne started, and was unable to reply. He continued—

"I thought that I had bribed that grasping Sosius deep enough to have secured his life. His cruel conduct to the good Hyrcanus deserved punishment, but not the punishment of death."

Mariamne looked at Herod, and said, with a subdued voice—

"My race and name are for ever dishonoured and disgraced; O, that I had perished ere I had lived to see my name a scorn: tell it not, for our enemies will rejoice—I shall feel shame when I appear before my people! He was cruel, and deserved to be no more thought of; but to be thus disgraced—O Herod, it is more than I can bear—curses on the heathen Antony!"

She fell on his neck and wept aloud, not yet suspecting that she was cherishing a monster in her bosom.

Herod endeavoured to console her, but grief, wounded pride, and anger, were exercising their mastery over her mind, and she suddenly retired from him a few paces, and exclaimed—

"You too have added to the disgrace of my fallen race. Why is not my brother, whose crown you wear, installed in the half of his rightful inheritance, the high-priesthood?

Why, Herod, have you raised an obscure, time-serving, ignorant hypocrite to fulfil that sacred office? Has the Roman unsolicited commanded you to reject my brother?"

Herod was both annoyed and surprised at her spirited and unexpected appeal, but answered with feigned composure and concern —

"My beloved Mariamne, permit not your just indignation against the heathen ruler to excite suspicions of my love for you and yours. How can I prove my love for you so well as by my conduct to your race? Hyrcanus cannot fill the office, for by your law he is now unfitted; no other Asmonean remains excepting Aristobulus, and he is surely far too young to take upon himself those great and solemn duties. Ananeel was placed there only till your brother attained sufficient years to enter on his office."

Mariamne had watched him while he spoke, and said—

"I entertained no suspicions of my husband; but I feared that some reason existed for the act. There is truth in what you say of my brother's age; but it is an unsafe precedent to make and to deprive a high-priest of his office at pleasure."

Herod was too much struck with the poignancy of her remark to prevent the irritation he felt from being perceived, and answered—

"It is well for me that I can look forward to Aristobulus being our high-priest, since our interests are the same; but to have so high an office, possessing such influence, beyond the limits of one's power, would be to have a rival in my kingdom. No; soon, very soon, shall Aristobulus be inaugurated; he is wise above his years.

When he had finished speaking, he embraced her, and recapitulated all the benefits he had received from her race, and those crowned by her love. He left her soothed, if not satisfied.

Months elapsed, and yet Aristobulus was not installed. Mariamne, now a mother, sometimes gently urged Herod to fulfil his promise, and always received the same replies. She feared being more urgent, for the jealous disposition of her husband was now evident to her; and the exercise of unlimited power brought into action the baser qualities of his soul. Alexandra, with less prudence and penetration into character than her daughter, openly upbraided Herod with perfidy, claimed the pontifical dignity as the right of her son, and refused to listen to any excuse. He attempted to silence her clamours by promises and presents; but she mistrusted the one, and unhesitatingly grasped all the bribes he offered her. Salome secretly urged him to persist in retaining Ananeel in his station; and as her advice accorded with his own selfish policy, he endeavoured to compass it. Alexandra, exasperated at his conduct, privately wrote to Cleopatra to solicit her interest with the triumvir in favour of her son. Herod obtained information of her having addressed the subtle and avaricious Egyptian; and being aware both of her personal hatred to him, and her influence over the triumvir, he reluctantly yielded, and consented to the abdication of Ananeel, and the assumption of the pontifical dignity by Aristobulus.

Herod was conscious that he had advanced to the place next in rank and power to himself one who had a greater right to the throne, and who possessed abilities capable of maintaining his right, and the love and admiration of the people.

Mariamne, when she saw her brother declared the high-priest, believed the reason which Herod had given to have been sincere, and, by her affection and thanks, shewed the joy that she felt at his exaltation.

The feast of tabernacles was at hand, and the king could not prevent the young Aristobulus from performing

at it the first functions of his office before the assembled nation.

Crowds from every quarter of the kingdom were entering Jerusalem, bringing with them tents, and beasts of burden laden with branches of evergreen trees. On the first day of the feast, the flat roofs of the houses in the city were surmounted either with tents or bowers of palm-trees, olives, citrons, myrtles, willows, and cedars; all the principal streets, and the spacious court of the women near the Temple, were adorned in a similar manner. The amphitheatre of hills around, to the very summits, was studded, amid vineyards and gardens, with arbours and tents, and seemed, from the multitudes assembled on them, to have a living surface. At night, as soon as the tower of furnaces was lighted, and which flamed during the feast with twofold brightness, countless thousands of lights burst forth amidst the tents and evergreens in the city, and from the surrounding hills; and a nation with one accord, and with enthusiastic joy, sung Hosanna, and prayed for the coming of their Redeemer, while thousands of echoes from the opposing hills reverberated the sounds of clarions and innumerable instruments, while the atmosphere was impregnated with the odour of incense.

Aristobulus rose above the crowd in height, and possessed a majestic and graceful carriage: his raven hair was parted in front, and hung waving on his neck, displaying a high and capacious forehead; his eyes were large, black, and beamed with gentleness, yet expressed dignity; his full and glossy eyebrows seemed to indicate the latent capability of being roused to deeds requiring courage and decision; his nose was slightly aquiline, and portrayed command; his mouth was small, but strongly marked and beautifully chiselled; his jetty and youthful beard fell in short wavings from a well-turned chin.

He performed the functions of his office with so much solemnity and grace, that Jerusalem was filled with the sound of his praises. The jealousy of Herod had risen to so great a height, that he could scarcely restrain the exposure of his feelings. Mariamne, exulting in the effect produced by her brother on the people, urged Herod to increase, if possible, the pomp of the last day, when Aristobulus was to offer on the altar the libation from the pool of Siloam. The better to conceal his horrid feelings, he joyfully acceded to her wish.

Before the evening sacrifice, the king, Mariamne, and all the royal household, preceded by bands of instruments and the priests, and followed by a multitude clothed in white, all carrying palm, myrtle, or citron branches in their hands, went to the pool of Siloam. They walked round it, waving the branches and singing together the song of joy. A golden vessel was cast into the pool, drawn up full of the water, and borne by priests to the altar.

As the procession advanced through the courts of the palace and across the Millo to the Temple, the air rung with shouts and praises of the Asmonean priest. Herod's lip was seen to become pale and quiver, and his step more hurried, while Mariamne raised her eyes, glistening with tears of thanks. The courts of the Temple were thronged. Before they arrived at the entrance of the court of the women, the high-priest advanced before the rest, extended his hands, bent his eyes to the earth, and from the top of the fifteen steps that separated the court from the space before the entrance, blessed the people. On entering the gate, silence reigned around, and he sung aloud—

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors!
And the King of glory shall enter."

In a moment a hundred clarions sounded, and the

people within and without, in full chorus, repeated his words.

Silence reigned again; then the women appointed to keep the gates sung, while distant music sounded in accordance,

"Who is the King of glory?"

The high-priest and instruments replied—

"Jehovah mighty and powerful,
Jehovah powerful in battle."

The second chorus of the women repeated his words.

Then the clarions sounded exultingly, and were replied to by thousands of trumpets for miles around, and the high-priest and all the nation sung as they entered—

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;
And the King of glory shall enter.
Who is this King of glory?
Jehovah of hosts, He is the King of glory."

Aristobulus advanced with majestic mien to the place of sacrifice; the priests and people bearing palm, olive, citron, and myrtle branches, went round the altar seven times, performing the great Hosanna, singing the twelfth prophecy of Isaiah, and with fervour the following passage—

"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

Then he offered up a prayer. As he rose, the golden rays of the setting sun burst forth and illumined the altar and the precious vessels, and shone on the superior part of his person; the gems of the ephod gleamed so brightly, that the gold and purple embroidered straps could hardly be discerned. The golden crown surrounding the mitre of blue, on which was written the unutterable name, was radiant with resplendent light. He reverently bowed his head, and held towards heaven the offering of the water of

Siloam—his lip trembled, and he appeared absorbed in devotion—breathless silence pervaded the vast assembly; their holy thoughts seemed interrupted by involuntary admiration of their priest. After a short pause, occupied by Aristobulus in a silent prayer, he poured the water on the sacrifice, and sung again, accompanied by the people, the prophecy of Esaias, ending with, "cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

As Aristobulus left the Temple, the acclamations of the people told their admiration and love, and they praised aloud the Asmonean name. Fear and jealousy burned in the bosom of Herod.

Mariamne observed with surprise and grief, and some alarm, a change in her husband's manner, which he vainly attempted to conceal. He was restless, consulted oftener with his ministers, and gave stricter orders respecting the discipline of his troops; he was often found by her wrapt in gloomy thought, and his administration of justice was more severe than before. He received her affectionate attempts to soothe or amuse him as if they gratified him; but there was a restraint in his manner at times which deeply affected her.

A short period after the feast of tabernacles, he sent for Babarrah, and when he had questioned him on the state of the army, and the prevailing opinions of the people, gravely yet familiarly continued—

"Emir, I am a king; I possess the love of the woman I adore, and yet am unhappy. I would that I could see somewhat into my destiny."

Babarrah watched with penetrating look the monarch's face as he paced the apartment, then replied—

"To see the distant shadow of unavoidable evil, would harrow up the soul; to view the fleeting gleams of happi-

ness followed by tempest-clouds of misery, originating in them, would turn hope into despair, and torture the soul to madness—lest we could see—"

"What?" hastily and perturbedly inquired the king.

"That the strange mixture, like the seething crucible of a cunning chemist, would produce some infallible medicament for our polluted souls."

An involuntary thrill passed over Herod's frame; he looked disturbed, and continued to pace the room; then stopping, said—

"Unavoidable evil! do you think, Babarrah, that evil and good are predestined?"

The Arab promptly replied—

"Sire, those are subtle questions, of which I know nothing. I feel free to follow evil, or embrace the good my conscience points out with unerring voice: whether Cyrus had the power of not redeeming the Jews from their Babylonian bondage, I leave your rabbis to decide."

Herod paused awhile, then continued—

"Troubled dreams attend my sleeping hours, and, like evil spirits, goad my waking thoughts. I would be rid of them."

Babarrah was too deeply versed in human nature not to perceive that some dark thoughts were revolving in the monarch's mind, and even guessed their import. He rejoined—

"Were I so harassed, I would tear away the veil that cursed evil ever draws before truth, and wipe off the cheating gloss with which interest and vanity try to deceive the eye of reason, as the mirage of the desert leads the natural eye to expect the pure and wholesome draught, but gives nothing but burning sand to increase the fever of the frame: then I would make untrammelled reason state the facts, and without external influence argue on them; and if

I doubted the result, I would apply to that unerring monitor called conscience."

Herod placed his hand on Babarrah, and with a voice the agitation of which he could not conceal, said—

"You are right; but to be perfect at such exercise requires practice."

He stopped; the Arab remained silent; at length he continued—

"When I was a boy, one Menahem prophesied that I should be a king; he caught me and made me hear him. I never remembered his words till I wore a crown."

He still paced the room with unusual quickness, then again addressed the cool attentive Arab.

"Of late, as I said, dreams have haunted me—twice have I dreamt that I fled from Jerusalem in poverty, and without a friend; and that Judas Maccabeus threatened me from the ramparts."

He looked at Babarrah as if to scrutinise his thoughts, but he only saw attention and repose upon his brow. After a considerable pause, he added—

"I have learnt that Menahem still lives, though driven from his sect of the Essenes, and dwells in the cave of Engedi. Are you afraid to go with me alone to that prophet?"

Babarrah could scarce suppress a smile of contempt as he replied—

"How can I fear to go where the king would lead me? Why should I fear to go, when my conscience tells me that I intend no evil? Sire, when you command my services, I am ready to obey."

Herod then bade him prepare two fleet horses, and be in waiting on the following night to accompany him to Engedi. Babarrah left him. Dermah observed that her husband was not in a tranquil state of mind; but only

heard from him that he had received the orders of the king to attend him on the following evening.

Night had not cast her sable shadow over the earth when Herod left the palace with Babarrah, both habited as horsemen conveying despatches to some distant province. They passed through the horse-gate, traversed the royal gardens, and entered the vale of the brook of Cedron. The rising hills on their right gradually assumed a wild and more rocky character, until naked and towering crags cast a deep and solemn gloom across the narrow valley. After riding in darkness nearly an hour, the moon peeped above the rocks, and touched with softened light the tops of the vine-clad steppes on the opposite side; as she rose, the cultivated slopes became illumined; at length the rippling water caught the golden gleam, and displayed one-half of the vale in broad light; the other, with its ridge of crags, was left in clear deep shadow, save where some narrow openings gave access to the beams. The white walls and distant hum of men told them that the city on their left was Azmaveth, and that they must soon leave the course of Cedron. A sudden turn of the brook brought them near the pass of Etham. Babarrah warned the monarch, and they turned to the gorge of the defile. The first part of the ascent was steep and so narrow that the horses could hardly keep their feet. A sudden bend brought them into the full light of the moon, then exactly opposite the entrance of the plain; the rocks on both sides towered above them, and here and there overhung the narrow pass. No sound was heard save the whispering wind among the light-hanging foliage which grew among the clefts, the quick breathing of the steeds, and their clanging tread. They hurried by the towers of Ethan, and galloped down the plain of Tekoah, until their coursers' sides, white with foam, glittered in the light.

When near the watch-tower of Tekoah, Babarrah rode forward, reined up his panting horse, and gave two signals. Herod, though he loved his guide, involuntarily grasped his sword, which Babarrah seeing, smiled at with scorn. The sound of hastening horses was soon heard; and presently Reuben and Jonathan appeared with fresh coursers. Few words passed, and they again pursued their rapid way, and gained by the pass the valley of Berachah; then skirting the walls of Middin, crossed the Jeruel, and soon saw the mountain of Engedi rising like a ragged tempest-cloud on the horizon. After leaving the vineyards, they verged to the left, and came to the steep which leads to the cave.

Their panting horses toiled with slow steps up the rough ascent, till at last they wound along a gloomy path darkened with stunted oaks, which ended in a sudden turn and an extensive terrace. They dismounted, and even Herod stood for a time gazing on the scene before them. Beneath their feet were crags and precipices, gradually decreasing until spaces of green, scattered over with fragments of rock, were exposed to the light: herds and flocks were sleeping or feeding on the dewy pasturage; beyond were masses of wood, over which was seen, as far as the eye could reach, the Asphaltic lake, glittering with rippling streams of gold shed from the moon, or yet more brilliant planets: marble rocks rose behind them to the height of many hundred feet, whose white summits shone like snow-clad peaks in the golden light. While they stood gazing on this scene, a loud and distinct voice came from a dark abyss below them. The monarch trembled, and Babarrah saw his face become pallid, as these words were pronounced from the gulf—

"Hastest thou to shed the blood of the innocent?
Refrain thine hand from evil,
And turn to the paths of peace.

The winter-torrent no man can stay ;
The course of the wicked is not restrained :
Hold, or sorrow of heart shall begird thee ;
Consumption, the burning ague, and terror shall consume thee :
Thou shalt flee when no man pursueth ;
Thou shalt sweep thy seed from the earth ;
And thy name shall be a by-word and a curse !"

The words were repeated by many echoes, each becoming more faint and solemn : the last, *curse*, smote on the ear, and mingled with the blast that swept across the great Dead Sea.

Babarrah, concealed by a fragment, watched the countenance of the king, and there read alarm, superstitious terror, and the workings of a soul perplexed with horrid thoughts. At length the monarch said in a hollow voice, which he in vain endeavoured to suppress—

" Babarrah, heard you that strange voice coming from the deep ?"

The unruffled Arab replied—

" Sire, I heard it."

Herod, with some confusion, asked—

" What were the words ?—It must be some maniac, or perhaps one of the wretched outcasts of the Essenes imprecating curses ? Curse was the last word it said, was it not ?

The imperturbable Arab briefly answered—

" It was the last warning sound."

The king, quickly turning to him, repeated—

" Warning sound—warning sound ;—thinkest thou, Babarrah, that it was an unearthly voice ?"

Babarrah fixed his penetrating eyes upon the king's, and firmly answered—

" Sire, ask yourself the question ; your conscience can reply to it more surely than I can."

Herod's eyes flashed, and his hand clutched his sword. Though Babarrah saw the action, he neither moved nor changed countenance. Herod slightly laughed: it was a hollow, half-convulsive sound, as he said—

"My dreams, and these gloomy solitudes, have conjured up a thousand phantoms: those strange sounds seemed to come from the dead. But let us go to the cave."

Babarrah led the horses within the entrance, and fastened them on either side; then they proceeded into the cavern. They had not advanced far, when the voice which had come from the gulf exclaimed —

"The king seeketh his destruction: a greater enemy is there than would have slain our father David,—even a lying prophet, the follower of Shatan."

They turned towards the entrance, and saw against the light the figure of a man. Herod drew his weapon, and rushed towards him; but the figure had vanished. They examined the terrace, and listened attentively; but they heard not a sound. At length, Herod proposed to return to the cave.

Even Babarrah entered the vast and gloomy place with some apprehension; yet he led the way with a firm step. The cave rose to a height too great for the eye to reach; though the moon-beams penetrated far into it. Shapeless masses of rocks jutted from the sides, and smaller recesses were faintly distinguished: then the cavern became so wide, the light so diminished, that all around them was one dark abyss. Babarrah still pursued his path with unaltered pace, and soon they were immersed in the deepest night. Their steps resounded in the lofty subterranean gulf, and echoed so as to resemble the tread of an armed band. Suddenly Babarrah stopped, and said—

"Sire, we must be somewhere near the turning to the centre of the cave."

They stood as if doubting, when a slight flickering gleam crossed their path and died away.

"To the left," exclaimed the monarch.

Babarrah obeyed; and they saw, far in the distance, a fire on which fresh fuel had been thrown. The flame burnt brightly, and shewed volumes of smoke spiring upwards, but which was lost in the darkness above. The projecting fragments of the rocks cast their misshapen shadows across their path, like spectres opposing their passage. As they approached the fire, the noise of rushing waters reached them; and they perceived on their left an ever-flowing fountain, which sparkled with ruddy light as it fell into a basin hollowed by its unceasing action, then ran rapidly away. They had nearly reached the fire before they observed, leaning on a splintered fragment of rock, a gaunt and sallow man, whose grizzled and matted locks fell on his ragged covering of wolf-skin; his matted beard descended to his breast, his legs were bare, and seemed insensible to the heat from the flaming fire. As soon as he heard the tread, he turned and peered at them with fierce and maniac look—he raised his staff above his head, and cried, with a voice which a thousand echoes repeated—

"Back! or may the curses of hadean legions seize ye! Why come ye here to disturb my solitude?"

Herod, pale, yet endeavouring to suppress his rising fear, said—

"Menahem, I come to consult you, and will reward you."

"Back! away!" screamed the man; "or in an instant I will involve you in tenfold night, and whelm you in an abyss from which even the night-hawk could not rise—away, and disturb me not!"

Herod advanced, and said—

"I am he whom you foretold should be a king: I will

reward you with all that can content your soul, and will grant all you ask, if you will but tell me—"

The man rejoined, with a voice of scorn—

"Reward me with all that can content my soul!—can you, monarch, give me peace? can you restore me to my sect, from which I have been driven for murder — the murder of my friend? Have you, with all your legions, power to scare away the demons that haunt my path?"

Herod had advanced within a few paces of the wretched man; Babarrah stood at a little distance, within the shadow of a crag, watching them.

The monarch, with more composure, rejoined—

"If I cannot cure the deep wounds of your soul, I may alleviate the pangs you feel."

"Never—never!" cried the wretch; "they are the scorpion-lashings of a harrowed conscience. What are your wishes? Why come you here with that Arab?—I know him."

Herod, in a firmer voice, said—

"Menahem, tell me,—shall I continue on the throne of Jerusalem?"

The miserable being muttered sarcastically—

"What would you do to establish yourself?"

Babarrah saw the lip of Herod quiver, and his eye assume a savage and wondering expression. Again Menahem muttered—

"What would you do to establish yourself without fear in your kingdom?"

The monarch replied—

"Make myself beloved."

"Take care," replied his examiner, "that you are not feared."

Herod approached this mysterious man, and said, in a lower voice—

" Have I aught to fear from the Asmonean race ?"

Menahem gazed on his pallid and inquiring face as he replied—

" You have every thing to fear from them, even the loss of a heavenly kingdom."

" Will they deprive me of my earthly kingdom ?" fiercely asked the trembling Herod.

" Your headlong passions may."

Herod came yet nearer, and half whispered—

" Will young Aristobulus ?"

Menahem fixed his look yet more firmly on him, and replied—

" There reigned in Israel a king who slew the priests that obeyed the Lord's anointed; he fell by the hands of the enemy, and his seed was cut off from among his people: so slay ye not the priests who obey the law."

A loud scream, with cries of terror, startled them—Menahem cried aloud—

" Take them from me! O, unutterable Name, protect me!"

Herod, trembling, stood riveted to the spot: even the Arab was startled, yet more collected than the others, and said—

" I know not if the spirits of the dead or the damned are here, but my conscience and my reason tell me that some demon haunts your souls: monarch, I stay no longer, nor should you."

Herod, unresisting, followed Babarrah, and they soon saw the glittering moonbeams on the Asphaltic lake, and loosened their impatient steeds.

They turned their steps towards Jerusalem. On reaching the more open country, Babarrah briefly remarked, that as the night was far spent, it would be necessary to hasten forward, if the city was to be entered by break of day.

Their horses' reins were slackened, and as the high-spirited animals increased their speed, each of the riders pursued a different train of thought. Herod was perplexed, and mortified almost to venting it by expressions of undirected passion; then undefined feelings of shame and compunction came like irresistible blasts across his troubled soul; these were followed by surprise at the voice which issued from the gulf, and at the screams when the name of Aristobulus was mentioned; he tried to account for them, and more than half suspected his companion of being the author: he rejected the suspicion by saying to himself, "how could he, when there are no grounds for such warnings? I only sought to know my destiny for the good of my kingdom; I fear the people, not Aristobulus; they might, out of love for him and his race, dethrone me." He looked no farther into the dark recesses of his own mind to find the lurking monster, and drag him before the tribunal of conscience, but more calmly calculated what degree of danger he was exposed to by having laid himself open to the observation of Babarrah, and the mysterious being, who evidently knew him, by the expressions he had used when he spoke from the mouth of the cave. His thoughts and feelings were confused, and he would have gladly hazarded his life to recall the events of the night.

Babarrah had studied too deeply the complex workings of the human mind, not to be satisfied that ambition, fear, jealousy, and the love of power, were exerting their united forces over the fierce and ill-directed mind of Herod; he had observed the effect of the popularity of the young high-priest on him, and felt awful forebodings of evil after the occurrences of the night. The voice from the gulf and the interruption in the cavern were to him enigmas; he was convinced that Herod had been watched, and that his steps had been tracked or his intentions foreknown, but by

whom, he could not even conjecture. He was too well acquainted with the monarch's character, not to be certain, that unless some extraordinary influence was exerted over him, the uncontrolled and evil passions of his nature would work up their victim to deeds of blood. He knew not how to stop their career; it would be impossible to apply to Mariamne, since she might suspect the extent and object of his apprehensions: Menahem he could not trust.

Knowing that among the weaknesses of the monarch's mind, suspicion and superstition were predominant, he thought that by acting on the latter he might suspend the evil he saw impending, and therefore determined to consult with Dermah. He did not conceal from himself the danger he incurred from the suspicious character of the king; and therefore resolved to appear most confiding, yet to be more on his guard, and more circumspect in his words.

But little conversation, and that on trivial subjects, passed between the riders when the morning began to dawn. They had hardly reached the palace-gardens before the grey mists disappeared, and the gorgeous heralds of the morning made known that the sun would soon rise above the horizon.

Scarcely had the orb peeped above the hills, than its rays illumined the city, glanced on the green hills bespangled with dew, and roused the herds and their keepers. Herod did not reach the palace unobserved; for his aged mother Cypros had missed him, and suspected that his absence was for no good purpose. When he entered his private apartment, the wakeful Mariamne was struck with his fatigued and distracted look, and thus tenderly addressed him—

"What cares, what unlooked-for occurrences, have compelled you to be away the whole night, and return thus harassed? Ah! Herod, little do the envious know the

cares of those who govern them! Come, and let me smooth your pillow, and chafe your temples, until sleep steals over you: no step shall wake you."

Herod, whose love for her had not been diminished, was touched by her affection; and after expressing some concern for his abrupt return, charged the Parthian with threatening an incursion, to avoid which, he had been to meet their leader in private. She was satisfied with the tale, and, lest she should disturb him, said but few words more. Nature reclaimed her right, and the exhausted king was soon buried in the deepest sleep.

The day had far advanced before he awoke, when he saw his beloved Mariamne bending over him, and watching with anxious look. He clasped her to his bosom, a tear moistened his eye, the events of the preceding night glanced across his memory, and for a time the kinder feelings of his nature made him try to stifle the recollection of the unformed fell intent that haunted his troubled bosom.

He saw no one the whole day excepting Mariamne and his mother, who had watched him from his earliest years, and since his elevation to the throne had increased her vigilance; for she felt a presentiment of some dreadful evil impending over him. He was sitting alone when she entered, and appeared absorbed in deep and gloomy reflection. She approached, and said, with faltering voice—

"My son, my son, you are now a king, and I a feeble old woman, hastening to where the wicked cease from troubling, and where perchance I may overlook and influence your doings. You will hardly listen to your old mother, who taught you to lisp her name, and call upon your Creator in the days of your youth; but I fain would speak."

Herod had always loved and respected his mother, and affectionately taking her hand, answered—

" My being a king will not make me despise the words of my mother, which I have ever found fraught with truth. What would you say? What favour would you require of me?"

The aged woman replied, as a tear stole down her furrowed cheek—

" I would, my son, in whom my soul hath ever delighted, that you should have patience, and listen to my thoughts. I seek not my advantage, but thine. I ask not for gifts, but would bestow the inestimable riches of peace on your soul. Will you listen to your mother?"

He assented, though his heart misgave him, and he felt surprised. Cypros looked on him with a parent's love, then said—

" My son, as righteousness tendeth to life, so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own destruction. You are clothed with power, and honour attends your steps. You were, from your earliest years, ambitious, and loved even the praises of your fellows: now you have power, be not like the wild steed — ungovernable by the reins of reason: now you have honour, fear not if others share it with you."

" At these words, Herod looked on his mother, and for a moment felt inclined to cut short her admonitions; but he allowed her to proceed, and partly from curiosity, and partly from his present tone of mind, listened with unusual attention.

" Fear not for your power and throne; for he that worketh righteousness can never be moved. Be not troubled in spirit because the people delight in their young high-priest. You have placed him there, and thus some of the glory reflects on you. Mariamne, that gentle and noble woman, is the mother of your son, who will be loved for the race he is descended from; and if wisdom and righteous-

ness are your handmaids, will be loved because he is your son. So, again I say, fear not Aristobulus, and your throne will be stronger established, and peace will attend your steps."

She ceased, and looked on him for a moment to see if she might continue. He was silent, and evidently interested.

"Why went you far away last night? I saw you return all covered with dust, and your steed with foam. It was told me that Menahem had been seen: he is no prophet. Herod, remember that Saul was at Endor, and that Samuel rose by the will of Jehovah, not by the wizard's incantations, and foretold his direful end. I guess that you went to Menahem. Trust in God—spurn not the words of your old fond mother, and prosperity will attend on you — the people will rejoice — enemies will fear you — and your house will love and support you. Take the blessing of a parent!"

She then quitted him, weeping: he remained revolving her words and his own thoughts: and after a time thus reasoned with himself, while the natural principles of his character were recovering some of their suspended power.

"The people were always fickle, and at one time received me with acclamations. He did not seek them, but was lauded for the grace of his person, and the manner in which he officiated; he is gentle, pious, and though with intellectual vigour, not aspiring; he doats, too, on my Mariamne, and would not injure me, lest in so doing he should affect her. His father raised mine, and was the founder of my own fortunes; his sister is my wife. No; one so young, good, and wise, and to whose race I am so deeply indebted and so closely bound, can never intend me harm. Mariamne, on whom my soul rests, loves him, and would feel the slightest misfortune which happened to him: how

ill should I requite her love, if evil should come to him from me! It is true that my kingdom is disturbed, that he is beloved, and that the people would, if they dared, place him where I am. This would lead to rebellion, murder, and civil war. But he is loyal, and would not heed them. No; my fears are all chimeras, and I will dismiss them."

This was the tenour of Herod's thoughts after the kinder affections of his nature were roused from their fevered slumber. He appeared among his people, was cheerful, and saw that the improvement in his spirits gave joy to Mariamne. He honoured with every mark of distinction the young Aristobulus. The sunshine of prosperity seemed to be dispersing the gloom and tempest-clouds which had overhung his kingdom. The gentle admonitions and example of Mariamne were beginning to strengthen the nobler feelings and qualities of his mind, to weaken those of a sterner nature, and to render clearer his powers of perception and reason.

But these happy effects were soon destroyed by Salome. Her jealousy of Mariamne's influence over the king increased her hatred, re-excited her slumbering vengeance, and made her meditate on the best means of punishing the supposed insults which had been offered her. She sought and found an opportunity of destroying the work in which Mariamne delighted, and anticipated bringing farther towards perfection.

Herod was walking alone upon the terrace on the summit of the palace, watching the sun sink behind the hills, and the shadows lengthen across the vale, when his sister joined him. At the moment a loud shout of acclamation rung through the air, and a crowd was seen near the Temple. She immediately remarked —

"It is the young priest coming from the evening sacrifice; he seems fond of performing the functions of his

office; his popularity increases daily, and half the nation is devoted to him."

Again the acclamations pealed on their ears, and she added,

"Ah, Herod! such joy as that should be heard only when monarchs are abroad among their people. Such popularity too often begets high thoughts, and that effect would not be pleasing in the present instance."

Herod became thoughtful; the perfidious woman continued—

"See, see, how the crowd increases! they are spreading boughs and branches before him. Who is that in the balcony of the court?"

Herod looked, and said, with surprise—

"It is the queen and her attendants. And who is that on the white charger that does such obeisance to the high-priest? It is Babarrah."

Salome watched his countenance clouding over, and gloomy thought gathering on his brow: she would have sacrificed a portion of existence to have known precisely the thoughts that were intruding into his mind: all that she could discover was, that his soul was not yet at rest, and that the young high-priest was the cause of his disquietude. After some silence, she said—

"It pleases me to see the joy that Aristobulus's popularity produces on Mariamne. How light her step was, how glad her mien, when she hastened to the wall of the terrace to see the crowd salute her brother; perhaps she measures his feelings by her own, for she seemed exulting in her very soul when she entered Jerusalem, and was hailed as an Asmonean: indeed, some malignant spirit loudly affirmed that she sacrificed herself for her country; but we know that she loves you now—"

Herod became disquieted, but assumed an indifferent air, and replied carelessly—

" What can be more gratifying than to see the highest officers of the state hailed with joy by the people, and my queen beloved by them too ! It is sanctioning my choice of the former, and my love of the latter."

Some nobles being announced with a deputation, he left the terrace for the audience-hall.

Babarrah, after his return from Engedi, communicated to Dermah the thoughts that occupied his mind while hastening homewards, and added—

" When ambition and jealousy are contending in a ruler's mind with the natural generosity of his disposition, unless the latter has some powerful supporters, it will be overwhelmed. Dermah, the queen's brother is in danger; Herod fears him, and will, unless prevented, cut him off. Were I his counsellor, I should bid him retire from the capital, and check the tide of popularity now bearing him to destruction. I have seen too much to consider myself safe,—we will try and preserve him, then ourselves."

Dermah was not agitated, though alarmed at the danger in which her husband was placed; her dark expressive eyes beamed on him with affection for a moment, then assumed a character of calm and high determination: she revolved the matter in her mind for a short time, then said—

" I dread the man,—for his better qualities are like meteors, bright, attractive, and catch the admiration of the crowd; but they have no abiding-place, and when not appearing, with uncertain flashes, leave the space around in tenfold darkness. In him the brighter qualities must be nourished in security and with success; jealousy and ambition will soon exhaust them; for while he feels jealous, he cannot feel secure; and while ambition sways him, he will, if he possessed a world, long for more success. Then what remains?—a ruthless tyrant, with all the demon-passions of humanity smouldering or blazing in his bosom, and with

such power that nothing but a dagger could extinguish them. I will warn Aristobulus of his danger! he can fly—whither? There is no place so safe as Egypt; Cleopatra will not injure him, but keep him as a check on Herod. Poor Mariamne, your cup is crowned with misery! Babarrah, we will stay until it were useless to stem the tyrant's anger."

They concerted the means, and watched the conduct of the king. Dermah, being the chief attendant and the friend of Mariamne, heard from her much of what took place within the private recesses of the palace, and listened to her expressions of joy at Herod's increasing cheerfulness, and how it sprung from his subduing the sterner feelings, which she fondly thought were caused by the temporary excitements of war, and the opposition by which he had been lately harassed. His mind continuing for some time in this happy state, led even Dermah to hope, though her husband dreaded the bursting of a more frightful tempest. He saw him come from the terrace to the audience-hall, and heard him ask whether it were Babarrah who rode the white horse: he watched the workings of his soul, and learnt that Salome had been with him alone, observing the young high-priest's return from the evening sacrifice.

At night he related the whole occurrence to his wife, who agreed with him that not a day was to be lost in warning Alexandra of the danger of her son. Herod had for some time kept spies about his person, and a guard, nominally of honour, round her palace, and had privately prohibited her interfering in any way with the concerns of the government: these proceedings had highly incensed her, and made her eager to escape.

Babarrah, the day before he intended to warn Aristobulus, had occasion to pass near the tombs of the kings, and there beheld Menahem asleep within a recess. On his

return to Jerusalem, he disguised himself and went back, and observed him near the entrance on the left. While pursuing a circuitous path to gain the opposite entrance unperceived, he saw two persons approaching the tombs, one of whom he knew from his gait to be Herod. The sun was setting; and he hoped to gain the tomb without being noticed, as the twilight was momentary; for he had no doubt that the superstitious Herod was coming to seek information from the half-distracted Menahem. He gained access by the opposite entrance to that where the wretched man waited the approach of the king. On gaining the centre of the spacious square, he perceived, through the narrow passage which communicated with an inner and smaller chamber, a burning torch. It was too late to retreat; and he passed through this long and narrow gorge, and concealed himself in a cell over the entrance of one of the complicated excavations which surrounded this abode of the dead. He heard no voice nor footstep, and saw only the flickering torch casting an uncertain light on the sepulchres, and gleaming into the labyrinthine avenues around. So long did this death-like silence prevail, that the temporary excitement subsided, and his mind was restored to its wonted calmness. At length the distant noise of footsteps were heard; and soon after, Menahem entered the chamber, followed by Herod and Salome. They glanced around, as if they expected the forms of those long passed away to rise and gaze on them. As Salome looked towards the part where Babarrah lay concealed, her beautiful features, large fierce eyes, and pallid look illumined by the torchlight, gave to her face the character of a fallen malignant spirit.

After a short pause Menahem seized the torch, waved it round his head, then cast it flaming to the ground, and left them for a minute just perceptible by the light emitted from the sparks before they became involved in darkness.

Salome raised a cry of alarm when the torch was hurled on the ground, and clasping the arm of Herod, evinced great dread.

Menahem, in a hollow voice, exclaimed—

"Listen, O king, to the words which I must utter,
And give ear unto the truths which must be told:
God speaketh once, yea twice, to the children of men,
Yet man shutteth his understanding, and perceiveth it not:
He hath opened my ears in a dream,
And sealed my understanding in a vision of the night.
Lo, in the days of thy youth I hid it not from thee,
But told unto thee that which hath come to pass,
How that thou shouldst become a king over Israel.
Now, again thou seekest of me knowledge,
And askest to be told the things that are to come."

He was silent, yet no one spoke; and Babarrah for a time only heard the quick breathing of the listeners. Menahem continued—

"Trust in Him who withdraweth man from his purpose,
And hideth, with the veil of truth, pride from his eyes.
King, what wouldest thou?
Shall the spirit of David rise for thy instruction;
Or shall Samuel come to warn thee of evil?"

Herod, with a tremulous voice, replied—

"Prophet, I want not the spirits of the grave; but I would hear if the kingdom shall pass from me."

Menahem answered, in a louder and wilder voice—

"I see visions of glory tinged with blood;
I see seed-time and harvest, and heat and cold;
I see the babes become men, and the youths gathered unto their fathers.
Thy kingdom is established for years."

Menahem laughed wildly; then shrieked and muttered, for the excitement had harrowed up his troubled soul: after a time he cast himself on the ground, and cried out—

"Cut not off thy friend in thy wrath,
Destroy him not in thy jealous anger;
Or like me thou shalt howl and weep,
And no man shall support or pity thee."

Babarrah heard sounds as if Herod and Salome had clung closer to each other while these words were spoken. Herod, with effort and half-articulate voice, asked—

"Prophet, honour and riches shall be thine. Tell me, and quiet my soul — will Aristobulus wrest my kingdom from me?"

Menahem no longer understood him, but lay muttering and crying. Babarrah had, during the latter part of the scene, descended from his hiding-place; and knowing the position in which Herod stood, and having before marked a sure mode of instantly turning to the narrow passage to the outer chamber, suddenly exclaimed, as he rushed past them—

"Thou shalt do no murder!"

Shrieks of terror were all he heard, before the fresh air, breathing on his face, led him from the tombs into the pale moonlight. Before him was the great city indistinctly seen through the dewy atmosphere; the loftiest buildings receiving the softened beams, and casting broad and deep shadows behind them, in which were more clearly seen the lights of the busy people. The distant mountains waned to the eye in mist. The only sounds were, the hum of the city, the bark of the watchful dog, the cry of some straggler from the herd, or the tinkling bell of some leader of a flock. Babarrah stopped for a moment to gain breath and mark his path; then darted among the neighbouring vineyards, and regained the palace.

He resumed his usual dress, and then communicated what he had witnessed to Dermah, who listened with anxiety, but not with surprise. He was well informed of all that passed in the palace, yet could not guess by whom the meeting of the king and Menahem had been arranged. His not being summoned to attend his master was a circumstance proving to him that he was right in concluding he knew and had seen too much. On expressing his ignorance of the affair to his wife, she immediately removed his doubts by telling him that Mazrah had passed her near the gate of the Temple, and said, "Ananeel has been to Engedi." They agreed on the following day to seek for Mazrah, and employ him to warn Aristobulus; and if they could not find him, to pursue such measures as were best adapted to effect their purpose.

CHAPTER XV.

There dwelt with Alexandra, as an attendant of honour, a young and beautiful girl, of the noblest blood, who often sought the society of Dermah, and was loved by Mariamne. Zillah had attained that period of life when the women of her country are given in marriage. Her person and mien were majestic; all her features were feminine yet fully formed, and blended in harmony with the dewy softness of her large dark eyes; affection and gentleness were those leading traits in her character perceptible to any observer. Mariamne and Dermah had long discovered, that when the nobler feelings were touched, her softness was changed into enthusiasm, and her affection to a feeling approaching to devotion. Aristobulus had been brought up with her; and Dermah had long suspected, that in her the affection of childhood was assuming the character of love. The manner of Aristobulus induced her to believe that their feelings were reciprocal, and only required one spark to inflame them. Dermah sought for her, and spoke of the estimation in which the people held the Asmonean race, and of the popularity of their new high-priest. At the mention of his name she blushed while she praised him. When she ceased, Dermah, with solemn voice and manner, said—

"I would risk my life to save him from impending danger, and so would Babarrah."

Zillah eagerly said, while her countenance as quickly assumed a look of intense anxiety—

"And so would I."

Dermah looked stedfastly at her, and emphatically asked her—

"If he were threatened with death, would you, with secrecy, warn him of his danger?"

At these words, Zillah sprung from the cushioned carpet where she sat, and exclaimed—

"With death? His life in peril! Tell me how, or where, that I may raise the city,—that I may give the war-cry, 'To your tents, O Israel!' and, like another Judith, seek and slay the treacherous monster!"

It was now evident that her smothered love had burst at one bound the barrier within which it had ranged; that her enthusiastic nature was lighted up, and would require a steady hand, and a mind well versed in human passion, to direct it. Dermah, approaching her, said, in a low yet firm and touching voice—

"Zillah, you love him: unless my penetration is like the vision-water of my native sands, his heart is yours."

The maiden trembled, and could scarce keep her eyes from bending towards the ground, while the tear that would not be kept back first glistened and hung on the long lashes before it fell. The blush subsided, and paleness overspread her face; her eye assumed a higher expression, which Dermah instantly perceiving, continued—

"Now I see your noble spirit rising and quelling every weakness, and becoming resolved for the protection of him you love. Be secret, or we are all involved in one blast of destruction. Herod is jealous of him—fears him—is working up his soul to—*murder him!* Start not, blench not, Zillah, but prepare to save him. The superstitious king has been in the cavern of Engedi, to consult the distracted outcast Menahem: he and Salome have met him in the

tombs; my husband's life, my son's, and mine, are in your hands — so, be secret, and beware of treachery."

The pallid Zillah had lost the look of fear — her hand no longer trembled, her tongue no longer faltered: her lips were closed, and her countenance bore the stamp of resolution, tinged with a passing glance of horror. She replied —

"Dermah, I love him."

She remained holding her arm, but said no more.

Dermah's countenance was animated with joy at seeing such heroism in one so young, and answered —

"Men may require many motives to inspire them with devotion — a woman needs but one — that one you have named; and if your soul replies to mine, it knows instinctively how to foil the sages of the world — how to curb every feeling, save one — and how to govern every movement of that curse-proving instrument, the tongue. He must to Egypt, and Alexandra with him: you shall come to me, and join him — perhaps with us; but you must warn him, when he pays his evening visit to his mother; she, for her own safety, will be cautious. Zillah, farewell! pray, and be resolved; for remember you love one whom a jealous tyrant, that has usurped his throne, would — hear the word, for it will nerve you — *murder!*"

She returned to Babarrah, who had seen Mazrah, and despatched him to hire a galley, to await their coming off Askalon.

It was an hour after sunset before the high-priest reached the palace of Alexandra, who, with Zillah, was reclining beneath a canopy on the upper terrace, inhaling the cool evening breeze. When he accosted them, he observed a slight blush cross the maiden's face, accompanied with an anxious look, and some trepidation in her manner. She drew her hand across her brow, threw back her floating veil

and raven tresses, and looked out from the edge of the canopy, as to catch the passing gale. This manner was so different from the gentleness and attention with which she was wont to receive him, that his curiosity was excited, and he determined before he left them to know the cause of it. It is probable that his own feelings taught him to suspect the tenour of Zillah's, and led him, without any expectation of their development being caused by danger impending over him, to seek an explanation. Their habits of intimacy from the earliest period of life, and his situation, removed that restraint which was usual in the common intercourse between the younger persons of the community.

Alexandra retired from the terrace, followed by her attendants, excepting Zillah, who loitered within the spacious tent. Aristobulus observed it, and waited until the train had disappeared, then approached the spot where she was. He was about to take her hand, and ask with concern what so troubled her, when the maiden suddenly turned towards him, and with restrained agitation said —

" We have no time for greeting now; the play of youth is past. You know, that when the people of all the cities hailed David, and received him with joy and with instruments of music, the king was jealous, and said, ' What can he have more but the kingdom ?' and David fled."

The anxiety of her look and the firmness of her voice were changed when she had spoken these words; and the fulness of her feelings were truly portrayed by the tender glance from her eyes moistened with the gushing tear, and the tremulousness of her unresisting hand, which the astonished Aristobulus took, as he sought to know more of the dreadful warning she had given him. She replied to his questions, after briefly telling him what Dermah had made known —

" Suffice; I am ready to do all that friendship and

sisterly affection can accomplish, and never, until you are safe, shall the womanly timidity I have shewn this night be seen in me again."

She prepared to leave him, but he gently detained her, and, after a moment's hesitation, said —

" Zillah, when we were children, we loved as such; that love has increased until it has filled my bosom, and swayed every thought: when the people hailed me, and those nearest and dearest to me gazed on me with joy, I forgot them, and sought for your approving look. What has now transpired convinces me that we have thought and felt alike for each other. If I had never loved you before, your devoted conduct this night would have inspired it, and bound me to you for ever. Zillah, I love you; and here offer, before our God, to be your husband — will you betroth yourself to me?"

For a moment she was silent; then raising her downcast eyes, replied, as she placed her hand in his —

" I will."

Again she paused, and seemed to be mastering the tide of feeling rushing through her bosom, before she added —

" Though that sacred tie will not increase my zeal to preserve you, or my resolution to meet even death, if it would ensure you from danger, for I loved you —"

He pressed her to his throbbing heart, imprinted the first — the last — the only kiss of hallowed love upon her lips, plighted again his faith, and remained locked in her embrace. She first recalled herself, and checked the flood of love that had spread over every sense, and was thrilling through every vein.

" Aristobulus, we must not spend these precious moments thus — you must be in safety: a galley is prepared for you at Askalon. It is proposed that you and Alexandra quit the city as two corpses in their narrow cells. When

once without the wall, one fleet Arabian will take you to the coast. Go, my betrothed husband, consult with Alexandra, and, if it pleases you, tell her what has passed between us; but tell not from whom the information was derived."

She passed onward, and disappeared like the vanishing form of a dream, and could not be recalled. He paced the terrace for some time, calming the troubled sea of his thoughts, and endeavouring to direct their course with steadiness and skill amid the breakers and sunken rocks that threatened him with destruction. These thoughts were often interrupted by a fervour of love that suffused his soul, glowed in his blood, and which nothing but a sense of peril could have prevented from absorbing his whole attention.

Alexandra had long been eager to escape from the specious imprisonment in which she was detained, and would have embraced any opportunity without so sufficient a cause. Sometime previous, she had written to Cleopatra, requesting an asylum and protection, and received a flattering reply; therefore the proposed plan accorded with her wishes. During the evening, she summoned, one by one, into her presence those officers and domestics in whom she could confide; and the whole plan was arranged, and to be executed on the following night.

Her chief attendant falsely conjectured that one Sabbion (whom Herod suspected of being privy to the murder of his father, and who consequently hated him,) was acquainted with the scheme, and spoke to him concerning it. The cunning Sabbion pretended to feel the greatest concern and zeal in the cause, and learnt all that was to be done. He well knew that Herod secretly sought to accuse him, and thought the present a favourable opportunity of gaining his favour, or at least of appeasing his anger.

While Herod sat transacting affairs of state in the council-chamber, Sabbion did obeisance, approached the throne, and presented on his knee a scroll, with a look which the monarch understood. He read the account of the intended scheme, and replied —

" Sabbion, thou deservest no favour at my hands ; but as thy petition seems just, I will inquire farther."

The traitor bent his head and kissed the pavement, then retired; and as he passed long, affected a look of chagrin and discontent.

When the evening drew near, Alexandra dressed herself in homely apparel, drew her veil close over her face, and taking a pitcher, left her palace for the house of a domestic, near the suburbs, from whence the humble funeral procession was to proceed. She gained the place, and found Aristobulus there, and ready to be placed in the coffin prepared for him. Though Alexandra was agitated, her desire to escape from Herod was so great, that she made but little demur, and submitted to the usual rites. The funeral, from its appearing to be that of some unknown and indigent persons, proceeded without inquiry or molestation until it arrived at the sepulchre. The coffins were borne within, when the entrance was suddenly closed, and three armed officers appeared, commanding them, in the name of the king, to deposit their burdens and depart. The domestics fled: one of the officers bade Alexandra return with her son to the palace, before so shameful a report should be spread through the city. Pale and alarmed, she obeyed. The following day they were summoned by the king to a private banquet.

When their arrival was announced, the king and Mariamne received them in the royal chamber. Herod saluted them with the kiss of peace. Attendants brought them scented waters in vessels of gold, while others shed over

them the sweetest odours. He then directed two chamberlains to approach, who received from his hand a frontlet jewel and a ring of diamonds, which were presented to the astonished guests. They were then conducted with ceremony to the private banqueting-room. Their near relationship permitted them to remain together. This lofty hall was hung from the middle of the walls downwards with velvet of the richest blue, round which was a deep border of embroidered gold. Above the hangings to the centre of the roof were carvings and devices, cut in cedar and ivory, adorned with fret-work and gold. The tessellated pavement was covered with a carpet of the finest texture. Round the sides of the room were narrow couches, and pillows of the same coloured velvet as that on the walls, ornamented with gold and needle-work. Near the centre of the hall was a low circular table, surrounded with short couches, on which the party reclined, and received from the hands of mute attendants the viands, fruits, wine, and water drawn from the deepest well; while unseen musicians touched the harp and lute to the softest sounds.

Mariamne, though afflicted at the conduct of Alexandra and her brother, to whom she was more than ever attached, was secretly pleased with the proceedings of her husband, and believed that they would restore their confidence in his protection and intentions. She exerted herself during the repast to shew her affection for them, and to remove the restraint of manner under which they laboured; and the king, following her example, appeared anxious to do them honour.

After the banquet was finished, and the attendants had retired, Herod, affecting deep concern and regret, addressed them —

"When it pleased the rulers of the world to make me, unasked, the king of this distracted country, the first, the

chief desire of my heart, was to share my power and my wealth with you. My beloved queen, Mariamne, will tell you, that your happiness and comfort were my greatest care; for I had to repay you a deep debt of gratitude. Your illustrious race cherished my fathers, and under the Asmoneans we were advanced. If the ill-advised conduct of Antigonus brought down the wrath of the too-powerful Roman on him, the fault was not mine. I went to Rome to seek redress for you, and there was, I may say, forcibly inaugurated king. This holy city, stained with blood, filled with civil discord, and divided by religious schism, yielded, and received me as the king; and when Mariamne became my queen, the nation was restored to peace. I will not boast of my gratitude; but it will be owned, that when the fallen Antigonus pursued you, and would have given you, instead of money, to the Parthian, I saved you. Since I have had the power, every honour has been paid you, and the people have shewn their love for you, and so given joy to my heart. Why, then, have you attempted to escape out of the kingdom? Can I add to the wealth or amusement of Alexandra? Who would fill the station and command the love and admiration of the people like Aristobulus? Why, then, have you, with a menial band, tried to leave me? Do you love the land of your fathers? do you love Jerusalem and her Temple? If so, how could you flee away, and perhaps revive the dying discord of the people? I should as soon have thought that the Jordan would cease to flow, or dew to fall on Hermon, as that the Asmonean would desert his country. Mariamne and I have wept at this unkind deed; but as we cannot long be angry with those we love, again tender you our confidence and true affection."

The voice of Herod was rendered tremulous when the

latter words were uttered, and he rose, turned away and paced the upper part of the hall.

Mariamne embraced her mother and brother with tears, while she felt at that moment more love for Herod than ever after inhabited her bosom; for she thought that his words had flowed warm breathing from his heart. He approached the downcast pair, and with unusual tenderness embraced Alexandra, calling her his mother; his manner to the high-priest was yet more impressive, and he termed him his brother, his friend, the sharer of his kingdom, in whom his soul delighted; until the young man bowed his head and could scarce forbear weeping, though horrid doubts still lurked in his mind, and the words of his beloved Zillah seemed repeated by some guardian spirit.

After they had departed, Mariamne so touched the heart of Herod by her noble thanks and ardent love, that he felt his dreadful intention shaken. One pious prayer might have stayed his hand, and changed his dread career.

The first intimation Zillah received of the return of the fugitives, was hearing of their being summoned to banquet with the king. Although doubt and dread occupied her mind, the deceitful phantom hope would have veiled them with visions of happiness, and induced her to believe that Babarrah and Dermah were deceived, if the former had not been disturbed, and still desirous of prosecuting the scheme.

The high-priest had gone to the Temple when Dermah entered the palace of Alexandra. She boldly proposed to her to repeat her attempt to escape, and offered to personate her until she was far away. Babarrah, though watched by Ananeel, contrived to make the same proposal to Aristobulus. Some hesitation on the part of Alexandra was followed by a decision to postpone the attempt for a time.

On the following morning, as if to prove the truth of

his friendly expressions, Herod was with Mariamne present at the early service of the Temple; and on leaving it, personally and warmly required Aristobulus to go with him to Jericho, where he intended to live during the joyous season when the balm was gathered, and also to enjoy the luxury of bathing in the pools which a prophet had been delegated to make salubrious. As the king was ready to depart, he had only to prepare and obey him. It was his ardent wish to see his much-loved Zillah before he left Jerusalem; but as that was impossible, he sought a brief interview with Mariamne. The queen received him with warm affection, assured him of her husband's sincerity, and bade him cultivate his friendship. She made no reference to his attempt to escape, but congratulated him on the increasing estimation, not only of Herod, but of the people. When he smiling told her of his love for Zillah, she again embraced him, and gaily affirmed that she knew it before he did himself, and added—

"She is a noble scion of a noble race, with more of our blood within her veins than any other in Judæa. On your return from Jericho, your nuptials shall be celebrated. From this hour Zillah shall remain with me. Go, my beloved brother, become chained with the bonds of friendship to the king your brother, and remember that by so doing you will make Mariamne happy."

She again embraced him, and they parted; he had left the room, again returned, and again embraced her, as if a presentiment of evil prompted him to take a last and yet more affectionate farewell.

He joined the cavalcade. In a few minutes Herod returned from reviewing his guards, and they rode forward. As he passed the portico, Dermah and Zillah were perceived by him through the half-closed lattice. The eyes of the latter met his anxious look—they were suffused with

tears; and as she retired into the room, he saw her strike her bosom. A moment afterwards, the hand of Dermah gave liberty to a dove, which appeared frightened at the array, and winged its way towards the sea. Aristobulus saw the act, comprehended the meaning, and felt an earnest wish to quit the party, and pursue the route it pointed out to him to follow: but he had been decoyed too far into the snare to be able to retreat; and so with heavy heart he continued his course.

About the time of their leaving the city, Babarrah received instructions to proceed to Samaria, and report the state of the works to Herod on his return. This incident increased his own suspicions, and left him not knowing how to act. Of the king's dark intentions he had no doubt; but when, where, or how he would effect his purpose, he could not divine.

Babarrah had on that morning privately despatched Reuben to find Mazrah, and to bid him return directly: but the distance was so great that he despaired of seeing him before the following day, when it would be necessary for him to be on his road to Samaria.

He consulted with Dermah on the utility of declaring their suspicions to Mariamne; but after much deliberation, they admitted that the facts on which they had built them were not sufficient to accuse the king to his wife. They for the first time discovered, that their knowledge of human nature, and the character of Herod, had, combined with his late proceedings, led them to their conclusions. The gates were closed before they had decided on any line of conduct, or had consulted with Alexandra. They communicated to her only a portion of the grounds of their suspicions, though they urged her to press her son's immediate return, and boldly declared that his life was in jeopardy. Three days were passed by them in great anxiety.

The dreadful terror that haunted Zillah increased, and was soon perceived by Mariamne, who, prompted by the kindest feelings, endeavoured to learn the real cause, and became herself infected with unformed indefinite apprehensions. The mind of Zillah seemed to require all her power to keep it from yielding to despair. Mariamne called on her by every endearing name, by every tender affection, to be more explicit. At length the fervour of her feelings would endure no longer restraint, and she exclaimed—

"Phantoms of horror cross me—he will return no more! Where are the warriors to protect him? I will go and shield him."

She rushed towards the door, exclaiming—

"To your tents, O Israel! Babarrah! O that my brother Gedor lived, whom the cruel Nabatæans slew!"

In her eagerness she fell, and remained senseless on the pavement. The attendants of the queen, astonished at her cries, hastened from an adjoining room, and bore her to a couch. Dermah, who came in at the same time, exclaimed,

"Command me, gracious queen, to send forth fleet horsemen, to bring back Aristobulus, lest he should see his betrothed wife no more."

Mariamne, though astonished, had not lost her presence of mind, and replied with calmness—

"Go, bid the governor of the city to open the gates, and tell Babarrah to hasten with a fleet and trusty band, and bid my brother return without tarrying to ask why! I fast and mourn until mine eyes behold him here again."

Dermah required no farther order, but hastened to obey it. In a few minutes Babarrah and his men were on the road to Jericho.

They had not rode more than half the distance before they met one running and uttering cries of distress. Babar-

rah recognised through the gloom the figure of Mazrah, and called out—

"Why hastenest thou with cries of mourning?"

Mazrah rent his garments and exclaimed—

"The high-priest of Israel is slain,
The waters have flowed over his head;
He is cut off from among his people!
Fear and a snare are come upon us,
Desolation and destruction pursue us:
Wherefore are the wicked mighty in power?"

He cast himself on the ground, threw dust on his head, and raised a cry of lamentation. The armed men lifted up their voices and wept, and shouted the alarm. One exclaimed—

"His blood crieth from the ground! to your tents! and we will punish the foul Ascalonite!"

Babarrah's eye glanced on the man, but his faltering tongue refused to rebuke, and his hand only half unsheathed his glittering blade: at the sight the men raised a frantic shout.

"For Jericho, and vengeance!"

Mazrah started from the ground, and extending his staff across the narrow path, said—

"To God belongeth vengeance—
His feet swift to slay innocent blood shall slide in due time;
The day of his calamity is at hand;
Punishment shall make haste to come upon him."

The vehemence of his manner and his attitude stopped them; but they gathered round him, and said—

"Tell us how the pride of Israel hath fallen; and tell us truly, lest we slay thee, as David did the messenger who slew the Lord's anointed."

Mazrah heeded not their threat, but replied —

"My life is in the hand of my Maker; I fear not what man can do unto me. I heard that the king had brought him and his mother back to Jerusalem, and greatly honoured them, whereupon I went to Jericho. When the sun was setting, the king, Aristobulus, and a company came to the pools. I lay among the balm-trees, and heard the king persuade him to bathe. He went with several of the company into the water; the rest had walked among the gardens of balm. Some pretended to play, while the king looked on and smiled. They surrounded him, and seemed to sport with him. Then I saw the king make the motion, as it were, of pulling down with his hands, as a signal to those who were around the youth; some dived and caught him, others threw themselves on him; he shrieked and sank. I sprung with my staff past the king, and called, as I leaped in among them, to spare him, and slew a man near him, and maimed another; but one smote me with a stone, and I was stunned. When my senses returned, they were gone; but I heard loud lamentations, and saw much people gathered together around the king, who pretended grief, and beat himself, and cast dust upon his head."

They raised again a cry of grief and vengeance; and unless Babarrah had prevented them, would have gone on to Jericho; but at his instigation they returned with Mazrah to Jerusalem.

While descending, they heard no sounds but the watch-words of the sentinels; they saw no light save the flame from the tower of furnaces, which cast a gleam over a great portion of the slumbering city; not a breath of wind stirred a leaf, and the stars were hidden by impenetrable darkness.

As the band approached the gate, they sounded an alarm, which brought the wakeful guard to the walls. No

sooner had they passed the portals and told the dreadful tale, than mingled bursts of sorrow and indignation arose; the sleeping inhabitants were roused by them, and came to the flat roofs of their dwellings to know what evil had befallen them. Mazrah ran through the streets proclaiming the death of Aristobulus. In a brief space, the silence and darkness that had reigned were changed for the loud wailing of a people, and the quick moving of innumerable torches and lights, and the eager voices of inquirers, and the hurrying steps of alarmed and grieving crowds. The loud wailing and unusual commotion soon reached the royal abode: jaded horsemen came hurrying in, all bearers of that sad intelligence, making their way through the inquiring multitudes to the palace. The priests and many thousands flocked to the Temple, and there called upon their God in their trouble.

Mariamne and Zillah soon heard the dreadful news; for they had run out on the lower terrace, and were quickly followed by numerous attendants, bearing lights, and hurrying to and fro. The people assembled beneath the terrace-wall, and were for a time subdued to silence by the presence of the queen, who stood with torn garments and her hair unbound, with her eyes cast up to heaven, like a marble monument of grief. Zillah, pale and frantic, with dishevelled hair, leaped on the battlements of the terrace, and in a voice of despair cried aloud—

"The beauty of Israel is slain—
The prince and the anointed priest is whelmed in the waters of darkness.
Ye daughters of Israel, weep over him;
Ye betrothed maidens, lament for him;
Gird yourselves and lament, ye priests;
Howl, ye ministers of the altar;
Come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God:

Blow the trumpet in Zion;
Sound an alarm!
The guilt of innocent blood is on the land.
O Aris——"

Her pallid and quivering lip refused to sound the name; she fell among the attendants, uttering convulsive sobs of helpless agony. As she fell, thousands of voices reiterated their loud laments, and the population, now assembled either about the palace, the Temple, or on the roofs of their houses, repeated the dreadful wailing until the morning broke, when a great company, headed by the queen, dressed in sackcloth, set out for Jericho. Zillah, delirious and raving with despair, remained with Dermah.

As they approached the city, the lamentations came at intervals like the loud sighings of an approaching tempest, which they repeated. The people had assembled on their houses, and as the queen and the great concourse with her passed along lamenting, rent their garments and vented their clamorous grief. Enigmatic sayings, insinuations of the manner in which he met his death, and here and there loud imprecations, were mingled with their tears.

Alexandra, who had rode by Mariamne's side, appeared almost incapable of expressing her distress, but from time to time uttered a wild and piercing cry, and struck her bosom. When the insinuations and dark sayings reached her, she turned her eyes, from which no tear had fallen, in the direction whence the sounds proceeded—her bewildered look increased the outcries of the people.

At length they reached the house where the corpse was laid.

Alexandra and Mariamne went, with tottering steps, to the upper chamber. No mourners had yet assembled there, neither had the first rite been performed. The

beautiful corpse of Aristobulus lay extended and half covered with his purple robe, the wet folds clinging to his lifeless limbs: his flowing hair, all soiled with sand, fell on the pavement and on his bosom: his eyes were open, their lustre and expression changed for the dim, glassy, and soulless look of death: the muscles of his face, not yet relaxed, seemed marked as if attempting to utter a struggling sob of hopelessness and agony. Near the body were two figures closely mantled, who struck their breasts and groaned—the one was Herod, the other Salome. Alexandra, at the sight of her murdered son, gazed for an instant, then, with a shriek of distracting grief and a gushing flood of tears, threw herself by him, kissed the cold lips of her child, and tried, with uncertain murmurings, to press and cherish his body in her bosom. Mariamne beheld the last inanimate scion of her race, as if only half believing that death had bereaved her of her greatest hope and the object of her deepest affection, then knelt by her mother's side — they raised their trembling hands: — Mariamne checked her bursting grief, though large tears rushed fast from her eyes fixed on her brother's face; they placed their hands on his stiffening eyelids, and drew them over the glazed orbs. The touch of death seemed to bring with it conviction, clothed in all its horrors; she trembled, screamed, and fainted. Herod, who through the folds of his garment had witnessed the scene, thought that Mariamne was dead, and hastened to raise her; but the attendants who had followed her to the door, held her in their arms before he reached the spot, and quickly bore her from the place.

Alexandra, still on her knees, looked for an instant on the king; then springing up, beat her bosom, tore her hair and garments, while she exclaimed, amid bursts of agony and tears—

" The voice of thy brother's blood, the voice of the blood of my only son, crieth from the ground. Where is my beauteous child? Ah! here, all soiled and wet; but the spirit is gone. The flower of my hope is cut down, and I am left destitute. My son, my son, would to God that I had died for thee!"

She turned towards the entrance, calling aloud —

" Haste ye for the elders: deliver the slayer of my child into the hands of the avenger of blood, that he may die! Haste, I command ye; for thine eye shall not pity him, thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from the land. O my son, my son!"

She threw herself, uttering exhausted cries and sobs, on his body, and was with difficulty taken away.

The indefinite language of Alexandra greatly astonished Herod, who was affected at the anguish of a mother bereft of her only son; and perhaps the sight of the lifeless body might have revived for a time the fast-fading feelings of nature: he gave way to expressions of grief, and even wept.

Salome, with affected dejection, tried to console him, saying—

" O my brother, that this great evil should have happened to Israel, and thou present. What can make Alexandra cry for the avengers? Surely she knows that while thou wert honouring him, it pleased the Creator to call him away."

They left the room together; for friends and priests came to wash and prepare the body: that completed, spices and aromatics were piled over it, and the mourners, with melancholy music, seated themselves around.

Herod found Mariamne still senseless, and with all the appearance of death. The scorpion-stings of conscience began to lash him, the suspicions of the people to alarm him, and the fear that he had destroyed Mariamne to

wring his bosom. For a time he appeared absorbed by the stupor of grief, and threw himself groaning at the feet of his beloved wife. He remained in this state until the following day; when a report was spread through the city that Mariamne was dead, and the king at the point of death from grief, fasting, and false accusation. The palace was surrounded by the people, and consternation filled the city.

Ananeel, who had consulted with Salome, and who looked to be reinstated in the high-priesthood, sought the king, and having made obeisance, said—

"May the God of Israel pour the balm of comfort into the wounded soul of the king. Be not stricken down with grief, and let not the backsliding of the wicked consume thee. Jehovah will uphold and clear his anointed. Would my lord the king permit his servant to offer to him the words of consolation and advice?"

Herod replied—

"Good Ananeel, what would you with me? My soul is sore stricken, and my friends have left me, and my enemies have raised a false accusation against me."

Ananeel bowed to the ground, and answered—

"When our father David knew the child was dead, and that his kingdom required his presence, he arose from the earth, and washed and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord and worshipped; and afterwards he ate bread and comforted himself. O king, thy servant beseeches thee to act as thy father David."

No advice could have been more congenial to the monarch's wishes; who replied, with a manner that convinced him Salome had not misjudged—

"Good Ananeel, such consolation and advice are befitting a man of God and a friend. Lest my silence and

absence should be misconstrued, I will go to the place of worship, and appear among the people."

He arrayed himself and went. This act of worship made some more doubtful than they previously were, while it impressed others with a deeper conviction of his guilt.

At length the day of the burial arrived, which Herod had commanded should be as magnificent as the land could afford.

Alexandra and Mariamne went again to see the body, now embalmed, surrounded by aromatics and adorned with flowers. Their grief was not less acute, though more subdued, particularly that of Alexandra, who bent over the coffin and remained long looking at her child; and when at length she retired, her maternal agony was too great for utterance: she cast one long and lingering look on his now placid and beauteous countenance, covered her face, and was led away. Mariamne's cheek was colourless, and in addition to poignant woe, an expression of the deepest anxiety and doubt was evident. She had not asked for Herod since she first saw her brother's corpse. Many messengers had been despatched to bring tidings of Zillah, whose delirium still remained unabated.

It was decided that the interment should take place at the tombs of the kings, and not at Modin, where the sepulchres of the Asmoneans were. In the morning the people gathered together. Soon after the sun had risen, troops of horsemen proceeded; after them came a mixed multitude on various animals, or on foot; bands of priests followed these, bearing, in turns, the bier of their departed brother; immediately after them were mourning women, accompanied by minstrels, and the king, and all the relations of the deceased: behind were guards and mourners, and the population of the region around. They rested during the heat of the day, and at eventide approached the tombs near

Jerusalem. As soon as the headmost horsemen reached the summit of a rising ground that had concealed them, there rose a wail of woe, mingled with the melancholy sound of flutes and soft recorders, from a great portion of the people who had come not only from the city, but from afar, and covered the sides of the surrounding hills. Their wail was answered by the great procession accompanying the body, and no one was louder in his lament than Herod.

The night had closed in, when the coffin was placed at the entrance of the sepulchre, and not far off the golden urn, containing the parts to be consumed on the funeral pyre, formed of resinous woods intermixed with odours and spices, to which even the poorest were eager to add. The wailing rose and fell like distant sounds borne on the uncertain winds. When darkness veiled the heavens, the pyre was lighted: as soon as the flame was seen, the cries of grief were redoubled, and the people rent their garments and wept. The flame had not ascended far above the urn, when a female form, without sandals, and with torn garments, came wailing and bounding through the crowd. Her speed and distracted air spread alarm, and many said that it was a spirit. She rushed to the projecting pinnacle of the tomb, and uttered so wild and shrill a cry of agony, that those around were awe-struck and silenced. Herod perceived that it was Zillah. Mariamne approached the base of the pinnacle on which she stood, and besought her to come down, but her entreaties were not heeded, and Zillah shook her dishevelled hair, and gazed on the funeral pile with the trance-like look of frenzy, while her quivering lip seemed to speak, as her bosom heaved with smothered respiration, and imperfect sighs were heard, as if the thoughts then agonising her, when moulded into sounds, would melt the soul to tears: that intense and vacant stare gradually subsided before the varying and

increasing expressions that successively crossed her face: she continued for a minute's space with her eyes fixed on the burning pyre, then glanced around, and while deep disappointment overspread her countenance, in piteous accents said —

"He is not there! where have ye borne him?"

She paused, appeared perplexed, and seemed to think; then continued —

"Have they lain him in Engedi, or whelmed him in the Asphaltic Sea?"

These confused ideas began to recall her wandering thoughts. She cast her eyes to heaven, and muttered distressingly; then a storm of conflicting passions gathered over her ghastly face. The monarch quailed and trembled, and in a hurried and fear-stricken voice, directed the attendants to bear her away; but they seemed confused, and so overcome by the sight, that they could not obey before she had fixed her eyes on Herod, and the storm of grief and passion burst from her livid lips—

"Cursed be the monarch who smote him secretly;
The burden of the curses of Israel on him!
O earth, cover not the blood of the innocent;
Let not its voice have a resting-place on thee!
Destruction and Death, declare that ye have heard
the fame thereof!
The mighty dead tremble from beneath!"

At these last words her voice became tremulous and hollow; her eyes, gleaming with unearthly passion, were still fixed on the king, who continued making signs to his attendants to take her away, while he seemed as fascinated by her look as if a spirit were gazing on him. At a glance she recognised Mazrah, kneeling on the rock beneath — the recognition was mutual: extending her arm towards the monarch, she continued, with utter scorn —

" See, he lieth down as a lion —
He coucheth as a lioness,
Saying, Who shall rouse me ? "

Her countenance was suddenly suffused with more than mortal fervour ; and she added, in tones that thrilled the surrounding multitude —

" He who looketh down from the heavens,
He who seeth all the children of men,
The Lord, shall smite thee with madness,
With blindness and astonishment of heart ;
Thy life shall hang in doubt before thee,
By day and by night shall fear pursue thee ;
Thou shalt have none assurance of thy life ;
Thou shalt gnash with thy teeth, and pine away !"

The king, roused by these appalling words, commanded, with a voice of mingled fear and anger, " the demoniac to be seized and borne away." She stood trying to look through the flames, uttering convulsive sobs. The wailing of the people round now rose again, and blended with the mournful flutes and the more distant cries of grief. Mariamne remained immovable, with a look of abstraction bordering on mute despair, for the wild words of Zillah corresponded with all that she had heard, and accorded with the dreadful presentiments which had haunted her mind, so that not a ray of hope yet gleamed on the gulf of misery which floated before her mental vision. Alexandra, covered with sackcloth and ashes, and absorbed with woe, sat on the ground near the coffin, and heard imperfectly what had passed. Salome had seen the whole, and privately repeated Herod's order to seize and carry away the frantic Zillah ; who, perceiving the messengers approaching, wildly repeated,

" He is not there ! where have ye borne him ?"

Then sprung on a projecting rock, and alighting on the ground, ran towards the tomb. Her steps were arrested by

the coffin — she saw the face of her betrothed love — then clasping her hands above her head, said, in accents of the deepest woe —

"Oh, he *is* dead, and will return no more to his house! ——

Thy spirit still hovers near —

O, had I the wings of a dove, I would flee away with thee, and be at rest.

Take me with thee — take thy poor love with thee!"

She sunk upon his bosom; and when her body was raised by the attendants, the spirit had fled. Louder lamentation told this fresh calamity. Before the coffin was deposited in the mansion of the dead, Mariamne had swooned, and was borne away to the city, followed by the guilty Herod and a great concourse of the people.

CHAPTER XVI.

Although jealousy of the popularity of Aristobulus had brought into action the viler part of Herod's character, and led him to commit an act of murder, all the better feelings of his nature were not yet wholly destroyed. The misery he had entailed on his beloved Mariamne, and the dread he had of her discovering his perfidious crime, wrought on his conscience, and made him for a season the victim of remorse. He clothed himself in sackcloth, fasted, wept, and mourned. This conduct and his increasing affection expelled from the mind of Mariamne the strange suspicions of her husband which she had involuntarily allowed to steal into it.

Herod, Cypros, and Salome, aided by Ananeel now re-instated in the high-priesthood, carefully and cautiously made known, not only to the people, but to Mariamne, the account of his death as told by the king, Nodamah, and a Moor who had been for some time about the royal person. Though Mariamne's suspicions were lulled, and she again returned the affection of her husband, the majority of the people suspected the truth; and the report, that an Essene had slain one of the murderers, and had denounced the king to Babarrah and his horsemen, prevailed through the city and in many parts of the country.

Salome often conversed with Herod on his death, who never withdrew from the subject, though every word stung him to the soul; and she more than once hinted, that many kings, instead of honouring their rivals, thought themselves called on to sacrifice their own feelings to preserve their countries from the horrors of civil war.

Alexandra had smothered to the utmost of her ability the suspicion that her son had been murdered by the king, and shut herself up, maturing schemes of vengeance and escape.

Babarrah, after consulting with Dermah, determined to go to Samaria, and then assist Alexandra in expelling the tyrant from his throne, and separating Mariamne from the murderer of her brother; and afterwards to escape from Judæa, and return to their native deserts.

Babarrah's deportment to Herod on his return from Samaria was precisely the same as it was before he knew of the guilty deed. The king, however, did not under-rate the Arab's power of dissembling, and longed to remove him. He bestowed on him the highest honours, and sent him with some legions to suppress the incursions of various predatory hordes, with the hope that he would meet with death. Previous to his departure, Babarrah sent a letter for Alexandra to Cleopatra, detailing the murder of Aristobulus, and imploring her to induce Antony to punish the assassin. The Egyptian, whose own hands were stained with a brother's and a sister's blood, cared but little for the crime, but coveted the provinces over which Herod ruled, and eagerly availed herself of the circumstance to destroy him, and obtain his kingdom. She therefore urged the triumvir to examine into the affair, and succeeded in making him summon Herod to Laodicea.

This order he would, if he had been sufficiently powerful, have resisted, as an infringement on his royal dignity, but he was constrained to obey it; and as a last, and perhaps surer resource, depended for acquittal on his bribes and address. In the meantime, he concealed his chagrin and mortification from Mariamne, and declared to her his joy at the opportunity of vindicating himself before the triumvir and the world.

Notwithstanding Mariamne had returned his affection, and was confidential in her manner, he thought that some suspicion of her brother's having died a violent death still floated in her mind; and induced Salome, under the pretext that she might suspect Nodamah, who had been the friend of Antigonus, to try and ascertain if it were so.

Salome's apparent grief, and the concern she had pretended for Mariamne during the illness that followed her brother's funeral, had placed them on a less hostile footing than before, and gave her some opportunities of conversing alone with the queen. But as she mistrusted her own influence and power, she artfully induced her mother Cypros to assist her. When not likely to be interrupted, they spoke with evident satisfaction of the approaching examination into the cause of his death, and even inferred that her husband had desired it, since he was present, and Sanballat was known to be an enemy to the Asmonean rival of his late friend Antigonus.

Mariamne was yet weak from illness, during which she had suffered so much grief, so clearly saw the emptiness of all human hopes, and had reflected so deeply on a future state, that her noble soul had become even more purified, elevated, and simple than before.

Cypros began by remarking —

"Alas! the heart of man is prone to evil; and those who are not of the commonwealth of Israel are evil altogether, and fierce, and unforgiving."

Mariamne rejoined —

"The beasts of the field remember kindness, and resent the injuries done to them by man. I never heard even of a beast of prey attacking but when impelled by fear or hunger; yet each appears to have been formed originally with a claw, a tooth, or an instinct adapted to some particular destruction. Man only has a mind capable of com-

mitting slaughter by rule, and with the idea of gaining glory by his deeds. Man only has taught his offspring not to forgive, but to revenge."

The old woman continued—

"I cannot think that Antony will find aught against Nodamah—he might have sported roughly, half-feeling some resentment; but, O no, he would not have hurt him. Moreover, the king was by, who I know loved his brother, and would have slain any one in his wrath, even on an attempt at insult."

Salome then said—

"Mother, thou sayest right; my brother loved him like his own soul, and has grieved for him with bitter grief. It rends my heart to see his sunken cheek, to hear his moans, and to behold him clothed in sackcloth."

Cypros directly added—

"My son honoured his funeral to the utmost of his power: not even our father Abraham, nor the wealthy Solomon, had greater or more costly things. Poor Zillah! in her madness, she accused us all of killing him! Well, her heart was broken, and so she must be forgiven."

Mariamne, at her name, wept, and said—

"I had begun to weave a veil for her bridal dress, and little thought that I should spread it on her bier. They sprung up together like two lilies of the valley from united stems; when one was trampled down, the other withered and died. Even the mighty pass away like shadows, and are no more remembered; but the untimely deaths of the young and lovely are tales at which the children of future days shall weep. Ah, far better would the rich gifts and odours have been bestowed on their nuptials than on their funeral."

She paused, looked towards heaven, and with streaming eyes repeated—

"The judgments of Jehovah are truth, they are just altogether;
The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be his holy name.
Few and evil were the days of the years of their lives.
His mercy is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew that is drunk up by the everlasting sun."

She bent her head in token of resignation, but the tears still trickled down her cheeks.

Mariamne had accidentally frustrated the intentions of her examiners, which produced a long silence. Old Cypros shed tears of real sorrow: Salome tried to weep.

The queen renewed the discourse—

"My grief has been doubled by seeing the sad effects of my brother's death on the king; had he thought that he was even exposed to danger, he says, he might have saved him. Perhaps some vital part was ruptured by the exertion, and he sunk exhausted. Yet it seems strange that they did not directly raise him and bear his body to the bank."

Cypros shook her aged head, and rejoined—

"Alas, when evil hath befallen us, and we feel the sorrow it bringeth compassing us about, we look back and see that by prudence and thought we might perhaps have avoided or lessened it. When sudden dangers come upon us, we seldom are as ready of thought or hand as when we perceive them afar off, and prepare to resist them like men in the battle-array."

Salome, with desponding voice and manner, added—

"What fearful astonishment could have been greater than assailed them when he sunk and remained beneath the water? In his agony he might have grasped some weed, some root or stone; the water was deep where they were bathing; he might in his struggling have gone far from

them. The days of man are determined; the number of his months are with Jehovah; he hath appointed his bounds that he cannot pass: so let us submit to his judgments."

After a short time, she added—

"It would be cruel to think that Nodamah intended evil to the youth. Yet I wish he had not been there."

Mariamne mildly and simply replied—

"I wish so too; and, as Cypros says, he might have remembered, as he plunged him beneath the water, that he had stood between him and the favour of a king. The remembrance of sorrow comes often enough uncalled for. Why should we open our wounds and make our hearts bleed afresh when it cannot avail us? Such misfortunes are the thorns in the valley of our pilgrimage, which leads us to the gates of Paradise. I am weary. May guardian angels protect you, and guide your steps into the paths of holiness and peace!"

They could not disobey this kind command, but did obeisance and left her, not satisfied, nor yet disappointed.

Mariamne had watched with restless anxiety the change in her husband's health and manner. He was frequently plunged in the deepest melancholy; sometimes he was most kind and yielding in his deportment to those about him; at other times he was suspicious, sensitive at the least degree of interference, and to her observing eye, mistrustful of all he heard. She concluded that the words of Zillah and the insinuations of the people, added to her brother's death, had most deeply affected him, and looked forward to his wounds being healed by time and the renewed confidence of the people. When she spoke to Dermah of him, her replies were always general, and sometimes indefinite; and when pressed closer, her praises were bestowed on his valour and magnificence. These circumstances rendered her unhappy.

While those occurrences transpired in Judæa, Herod, with the perversity of human nature, was endeavouring to induce the good Hyrcanus to return to Jerusalem, since he feared the Parthian monarch might incite him to try and recover the regal authority without the pontifical dignity. He knew that Hyrcanus had never been formally deposed from the throne, though he had been expelled Jerusalem by Antigonus, and was only incapacitated from performing the functions of the pontifical office. The people loved him, not only because he was an Asmonean, but because he was mild, charitable, and humane.

The crafty Santacalla was selected by Herod to win the Parthian king Phraates to his wishes. He went loaded with costly presents, money, and promises. So well did the subtle ambassador perform his master's orders, that the good Hyrcanus, in whose bosom (like the rest of his nation) a desire to die in Jerusalem was predominant, consented to return. It was not until Herod was on the point of setting out for Laodicea, that Hyrcanus reached Jerusalem, borne down with grief at the death of Aristobulus, and only desiring to embrace his children, pray in the Temple, and be gathered unto his fathers.

He heard from Dermah all the particulars relating to his grandson's death; and from that hour mistrust and melancholy were portrayed upon his brow. Herod's suspicion and fears made him desirous of being acquainted with every action of his prisoner, and he soon learnt that he had held several interviews with Dermah: possessed of that knowledge, he prepared to leave Jerusalem with increased reluctance.

Salome, whose hatred for Mariamne had not diminished, affected great grief at parting with her brother; and being alone, availed herself of the opportunity, and said—

"It has been thought that Alexandra instigated the

Egyptian queen to urge the triumvir thus to insult you; but I think it some vile scheme of hers to cut off our beloved Mariamne, since she knows, as well as ourselves, that Antony has long desired to possess her: so long as you exist, the subtle woman is aware that her attempts would all be vain. You numbered with the dead, poor Mariamne would become an easy sacrifice to her vengeful jealousy. Antony may think you the obstacle opposed to his wish, and so acquiesce in Cleopatra's request, and destroy you, that he may not be frustrated. O my brother, cannot you circumvent their base intentions, and avoid going to Laodicea? I dread the worst."

She fell on his neck and wept, while he was agitated and perplexed at her remarks. He, however, dissembled his thoughts, assured her that her affection led her unnecessarily to anticipate evil, and bade her farewell.

Herod had repented; he had felt the agony of remorse and the stings of conscience; he had shrunk with horror at the thought of repeating his crimes; — but he suddenly saw before his eyes the threatening phantoms of two rivals to all he held dear on earth,—the one to his kingly rank and power, the other to his love; the latter had become an absorbing passion, and would at least have balanced with the former: to those was added the fear of discovery by Hyrcanus, who, though mild and forgiving, he knew would raise the nation as soon as he was gone, if he were assured of his guilt. His spies had told him of his interviews with Dermah; his own knowledge of human nature informed him, that Babarrah was satisfied that the death of Aristobulus was a foul murder; and he knew the noble Arab too well, not to be convinced that he was only waiting until he could level an irreparable blow at his power or life. It was his nature to feel a fierce inclination to resent the machinations of a woman like Cleopatra, as well as to

feel a burning and reckless spirit of resistance against any thing that threatened him with danger.

He strode about his private chamber, lashing up his fury, and yielding to his jealousy of Antony, until he thought its pangs might haunt him in the grave.

At the same time he magnified the friendly conduct of Malchus, the king of Arabia, towards Hyrcanus, into a conspiracy against him, which had been partly matured when he visited him on his way from Babylon.

The repentance and consequent feelings of the monarch had no firm foundation. They were not built on sorrow for his wickedness, but on the sandy basis of a disposition possessing some kind and noble principles, unsupported by a dependence on Providence, and with a faint belief of future retribution. The various apprehensions that at once assailed him destroyed the precarious state of mind into which his recent atrocity, and the pious example of Mariamne, had brought him, and he plunged at once into the fallacious stream which hurried him into the vortex of crime and misery. He thus held converse with himself—

"Shall the wretched minion of that fly, that crocodile, that mistress of the land of bondage, take my Mariamne? Shall that spawn of slime and serpents seek to get her paramour to destroy me, as he did her brother, that she may glut her jealous vengeance on my beauteous queen. She would rather that I should plunge a dagger into her bosom. I once promised to do so, instead of suffering Antony to have her, and she embraced me for the promise. She did; and well I know that she has not changed her wish. Ah, I have it; and that's all safe.

"I wish Hyrcanus, too, were in paradise. Surely he has seen enough of life, in well-nigh eighty winters, to be cloyed with it. He has lost his ears; perchance the old man would die piecemeal. The next cut would be his head;

and that the intrigues of Malchus may procure him. Am I to be hunted from my throne by women and dotards?

"Curses on my folly for placing an army under the orders of that fearless Arab! It was adding wings and talons to a mewed-up eagle. I might as well expect a Libyan lion to fawn and crouch to his pursuer, as that penetrating Arab to bend to my wishes. I cannot give the word that would awake the dead, or methinks I would recall from his rotting sleep the foolish boy who was driven by praises to destruction. Had he not died, such power and popularity as he possessed would have recalled the remembrance of what he might have been, and so excited a wish to be what I am; and then would have followed war and all its blessings on a savage, exhausted people. There seems much good in the general destiny of events; it were perhaps better to yield to their mighty stream than attempt to contend against it. Joshua, Samuel, Cyrus, Cæsar, were all means for producing some great ends, and why should not I be so?"

He summoned his uncle Joseph, and held with him a long conversation on affairs of state, and gave him directions how to act during his absence at Laodicea. Soon afterwards Herod left his capital without his usual retinue, and hastened to obey the summons of the triumvir.

CHAPTER XVII.

Mazrah and Menahem were both on the confines of the city; the former in the habit of receiving intelligence from Dermah. On the departure of Herod, he hastened to Babarrah, who, having terminated the campaign, returned to Jerusalem. He soon held several conversations with Hyrcanus, whom he seriously advised to escape, and to throw himself on the protection of the king of Arabia.

Alexandra strongly urged him to follow the advice of Babarrah, and thus save himself from impending destruction. The old prince had seen too many reverses to be anxious to preserve the few remaining years which, in the common course of nature, he had to pass on this earth, and professed the imperishable desire of dying in Jerusalem. Babarrah foresaw that the extermination of the Asmonean race would follow the first of the tyrant's murders, and so longed to save them from the threatening ruin. He, in conjunction with Alexandra and Dermah, tried every argument and persuasion to induce him to fly to Arabia, but in vain: at length circumstances occurred which led to Mariamne's joining them in their entreaties.

Joseph, to whom Herod had entrusted, with Mariamne, the executive government during his absence, was advanced in years, with an understanding capable of selecting and pursuing the right course, but with a disposition too confiding for a ruler, and liable to be hourly imposed on by the crafty people whose affairs he now administered. He was zealous for the honour, welfare, and happiness of his

nephew; and in his attempts to increase the estimation of his merit among his family, was injudicious, and so persevering as to excite their smiles.

The common routine of business, and the requisite attention to the queen, gave him continual opportunities of exhibiting this amiable weakness. Mariamne had often rallied him on the number, warmth, and variety of his encomiums. His niece, Salome, produced a long scroll, on which they were inscribed. The aged Cypros smiled at his conduct, but never contradicted his assertions. Joseph's affection for Herod would have produced a similar feeling for Mariamne, merely because she was his wife, even if her virtues had not excited it. Her beauty and conduct rendered her the object of his enthusiastic and respectful adoration. Nothing transpired in the city that he did not immediately make known to her, and he was most confidential in all his communications. This conduct, and his unguarded admiration, did not escape the vindictive Salome, who carefully registered in her memory every minute attention or expression of interest.

Once, when alone with Mariamne, he entered on his usual theme—the praises of Herod, an enumeration of his kindnesses, and the proofs of his love. The queen, wishing to see how far he would pursue the topic, jocularly resisted him, until at length he said—

"If Michael himself were to speak, he could not give a more convincing proof of his love for you than the secret order with which I am entrusted,—a command which shews that the king cannot exist without you, and that even in the grave he would not be separated from you. Should Antony, at the instigation of the vile Cleopatra, slay him, he has made me swear to plunge this dagger into your bosom."

He displayed, with an air of triumph, the weapon which

Herod usually wore, to the astonished Mariamne, adding, as he raised it—

"He said that he merely deputed me to perform a solemn promise he had made to you."

Mariamne's cheek was for an instant flushed with crimson, for she could not doubt the truth of Joseph's words,—then resumed its paler hue: neither her voice nor manner underwent any change, but indignation filled her bosom, and horrid doubtful thoughts rushed through her mind with irresistible impetuosity. She looked near her, and clasping her infant to her bosom, concealed, while caressing it, the burning tears that gushed into her eyes.

The infatuated Joseph mistook this effect which his revelation of the secret had produced, for conviction that his declaration of Herod's unbounded love was true. Mariamne saw with quickness that it proceeded from two-fold jealousy, and a heart capable of contemplating the murdering of all who thwarted its savage passions. At the same moment the warning words of the dying soldier flashed across her memory, that he was like a lion's whelp, easily roused to anger, and allayed it with blood; or like a fire which consumed itself and all around it; or like the chill icy wind on the snow-clad mountain. Undefined forebodings, formed partly of thoughts and partly of feelings, followed in rapid and harrowing succession. She pressed her infant to her bosom, hurried to her private room, and there in secret gave way to that bitterness of woe which a woman feels when her last hopes are swept away. The unthinking Joseph, eager to complete his supposed triumph, and to obtain a declaration that he had not overvalued Herod's love, followed the queen almost immediately after she had left the apartment. Salome, from a contiguous corridor, had seen Mariamne pass towards her private rooms with a hurried gait, and directly entered the passage from which she had

come, and met Joseph pursuing her steps. He stopped, encountered her look, and involuntarily blushed. The demon spirit turned and went exulting to another part of the palace. Joseph was conscious of embarrassment, but he never conjectured that any inference prejudicial either to Mariamne or himself could be drawn from the circumstance; indeed, so slight was the impression on his mind, that he not only never mentioned it, but even forgot it.

Mariamne recovered her composure sufficiently to appear in the evening, and attended the sacrifice in the Temple, and there offered up fervent prayers for protection from her heavenly Father. When she retired, her thoughts were fully occupied with the dreadful secret, and its probable effects; her chief anxiety was for her children; without her watchful eye, she knew not one whom she could trust, excepting Dermah, to bring them up in the paths of piety and virtue. For their sakes she considered it her duty to communicate to Hyrcanus and her mother her wishes relating to them, lest a sudden and violent death should overtake her. If she could have relied on the forbearance and discretion of Alexandra, she would have made known to her, as a mother, the discovery; but, in addition to her want of judgment, she had naturally cherished a hatred for Herod that amounted to a just detestation and abhorrence: of this Mariamne had long been aware, and conjectured that it arose from her considering the death of Aristobulus in some degree occasioned by the king not interfering when Nodamah and the others attacked him in the water. Although she felt deeply her husband's inhuman order to murder her, she saw no utility in embittering the latter years of Hyrcanus by relating it to him, and could not suppress the noble pride of not becoming her husband's accuser. Perhaps she retained some vain and lingering hopes of happier days.

Before she retired to rest, she went to the room where her infants were sleeping, and sat for a time watching their peaceful faces and scarcely moving breasts. At first, maternal love alone filled her bosom; soon her look became more fixed, and her countenance expressive of deep and troubled anxiety, while these unmingled thoughts intensely occupied her mind.

"If I am murdered, who will protect you? Your father will be with me, numbered among the dead. The good Hyrcanus must soon follow, for he is old. My mother cannot save you. Would the fierce contenders for a kingdom allow two springing flowers to stop their hot career, and not crush them with their iron tread? No, no; men are made of sterner mettle than to feel for babes who might deprive them of a diadem. Were I in Abraham's bosom, I could be contented to hear that some ruffian-hand had sealed your little eyes for ever."

It was a horrid thought, and she awoke from her reverie, bent over them, and gently kissed their lips. Tears flowed from her eyes, and she placed her hand on her brow, while the anticipations of future misery crowded into her soul.

"The blood-stained Cleopatra is prowling round, and would prey upon thy father's kingdom. She, whose hands are steeped in the blood of her nearest kindred, would, like a she-wolf, seize you. She knows no remorse; your innocence would not save you. She would drown the babes in their father's blood. I have no brother to raise his arm and shield you; the jealous waters overwhelmed him. I am made to drink the bitterest dregs of sorrow. My race driven from their throne, slain, brought to untimely graves; my husband menaced with death; my babes to be cast on the wide world, to become the victims of the merciless; and I doomed by my husband to be sacrificed to his de-

parted shade—to be immolated to the accursed Moloch. Woe, woe! which way shall I flee? where shall I seek for refuge?"

She clasped her hands, and gazed on her yet sleeping infants with a look of despair. One awoke, and smiling, stretched its little hands towards his mother. In an instant she burst into a flood of tears; and as she folded the baby to her bosom, exclaimed—

"O, where is the refuge for those that make widows their prey,
And lurk after the inheritance of the fatherless?
To whom shall I flee for help in this day of desolation?
To whom will pass the glory of my race?
I will flee to Him who protecteth the widow and the fatherless,
Who guardeth him that hath none to help him.
Glory is but a dying flame:
The wind sweepeth over all earthly things,
And not even a transient shadow marketh where they were.
I know that the Avenger liveth. He, the last, will stand above the dead;
In him will I trust to glorify my race,
He shall give retribution to the souls of all the dwellers upon earth."

She knelt, and holding up her children, besought, with fervid spirit, her Creator to guide and preserve them, and lead them in the way of truth. After her excitement had subsided, she remained weeping over the unconscious innocents, who had fallen again to sleep.

The morning had dawned, and she was surprised at the sudden entrance of many of her attendants, all wailing and rending their garments. When they saw her thus discon-

solate, they thought that she knew the tidings which had reached the city, and continued their lamentations. Her distracted air and unchanged dress made them conclude that she had been mourning the live-long night, and they only answered her inquiries by cries of woe. Dermah at length appeared with consternation on her brow; and after paying a hasty obeisance, stood looking at Mariamne, then on the children. The queen at length, with stifled accents, exclaimed —

"I am prepared: tell me, I implore you, what has happened."

Dermah instantly replied —

"Antony has slain him!"

"Who? what?" asked the queen in a hollow voice.

"The king! the king!" replied the attendants.

Mariamne uttered a loud shriek, rushed to her children's couch, and extending her mantle, exclaimed —

"They shall not have them; — help, — save them! Call Babarrah — summon the guards — help!"

She seized, with a sudden spring, a spear that hung upon the wall, and with an hysterical convulsion said —

"Now, she-wolf! come, with the eagle by your side, and I will shew you what a mother and an Asmonean princess can effect."

At that moment Babarrah entered the apartment; he looked but for a moment, then bent, and said, when rising, as he drew his falchion —

"My queen, the guards are here, and I await your orders."

His appearance and these words restored her mind to its balance, and she commanded him, in a voice that ensured obedience —

"Seize on Joseph! Send a hundred men, ready with the bow and spear, to guard my children. Take such pre-

cautions as seem good to your better judgment to secure the peace of the city. Send to our captains, to guard the fenced cities and occupy the passes !"

Then, in a louder voice, added —

" Suffer not, on your peril, a Roman to pass the gates."

Reuben and Jonathan, now high advanced, had followed Babarrah, and as soon as the words had passed her lips, summoned a chosen band, who entered as she ceased speaking. She waved her spear, and they formed in an instant round her, when she thus briefly addressed them —

" Ye warriors of Israel!—those babes are mine. The she-wolf of Egypt would lap their blood. They are the children of your victorious Herod, and the last of the Asmonean line. To you I commit them; and remember that I in their defence would die, and so expect the same of you."

A fierce murmur pervaded the throng as she threw down the spear; and casting one parting look on her children, followed Babarrah, who had returned, to the audience-hall, filled with the chief captains, and surrounded by faithful guards.

Her attire was disordered, her face pale and haggard; she breathed deeply, yet her step was firm: glances of poignant grief crossed her brow, and were banished by the quick return of that high resolve to which the great emergency was working up her soul. She ascended the throne, and not daring to hesitate, immediately addressed the assembly —

" Elders, captains, and honourable men of Israel,—a dreadful report has been rumoured through the city, of our king having been slain at the instigation of the enemies of Israel. Though I am overcome with grief, it would not become me were I to forget in my calamity the duty I owe to my people. This report may be false; but lest it should

prove true, I have ordered those measures to be adopted which will insure the safety of the city and the inhabitants, as well as of the country. Remember, that I now act in the name of your king, and command you all to your various posts, and recommend a vigilant watch to be kept on every side, and that all discussions on the affairs of our government be avoided. Messengers have already sped their way to Laodicea; until I hear of their return, or of some more authentic intelligence, I again command you each to his post; while I await in anguish, fearing that this dire intelligence may be true. Accept the sincerest thanks for your ready zeal."

She could scarcely pronounce these words, and was assisted to her apartment, where Dermah awaited her. The manner in which she had passed the night, the unexpectedness of the report, and the state of mind which the discovery of the king's sanguinary command had produced, were the sufficient causes for the brevity and homeliness of her address. It had, notwithstanding, the desired effect, and proved to the people that their queen was not inefficient.

Many inquiries were made for the temporary procurator Joseph. Babarrah had so rapidly and secretly performed the order for his seizure, that he was in close confinement within his house before he could communicate with any of his friends and adherents.

Mariamne, knowing the wisdom, courage, and tried fidelity of Babarrah, summoned him to her presence, and told him and Dermah the secret she had discovered, and declared that anticipations of her children's future misery, and apprehensions for her own life, were the reasons for her desiring him to be instantly confined, and requested Babarrah to see every attention paid to his prisoner, but to be careful that he held no correspondence with any one.

The artificial state to which she had wrought herself had prevented her from feeling the full effects of the dreadful shock she had really sustained.

This Babarrah perceived, and dreading the force of the reaction, attempted to anticipate it by decidedly expressing his doubts of the truth of the report, and as decidedly stating his suspicions that it had not been raised without some motive: he even boldly pronounced the king himself as the first promulgator of it, and expressed his hope that Hyrcanus would keep within his palace, and have near him two of his own friends, on whose discretion he could rely, and as many of the known adherents of Herod.

Mariamne understood the full import of his words, and trembling, drew her hand across her pallid brow, and in a subdued tone said —

"O God, O God, preserve and guide thine handmaid!"

Babarrah did not weaken the impression his words had produced, and remained silent, while his quivering lip truly told that he felt acutely for his queen and friend. Dermah respectfully approached her, and in the most soothing manner entreated her to retire and take some rest. She thanked her friend, but firmly refused until Babarrah reported to her the state of the city. He had prepared to give her that information, by ordering officers to bring to him at intervals reports from various quarters, and only left her for a short space, before he returned with satisfactory information.

Fear and doubt had so diminished the affection Mariamne had cherished for her husband, that the intelligence of his death did not excite in her the poignant grief she would have endured for one of whom no fear could be felt. The account arriving so soon after her obtaining confirmation of his ferocity and headlong violence of passion, had increased her fears and perplexity of mind, and led her to

feel more for her children than for him, though she suffered greatly while remaining in doubt, and was compelled to exert all her mental vigour to prevent the surprise and consternation from rendering her incapable of reflection and decision of conduct.

She allowed Dermah to lead her to her couch, and to bring her children; she folded them in her arms, and her exhausted mind and body were soon under the powerful dominion of the profoundest sleep.

Salome was among those whom the report of Herod's death greatly affected, since on him chiefly depended her consequence and wealth. As her affection for him was nominal, she was able, with more than usual quickness, to note every thing which transpired, that she might convert whatever might be useful to her in the prosecution of her own selfish schemes, whether the report should prove true or false. It was evident to her, when the queen appeared, that she had not been undressed during the night. Joseph was no where to be found. Every avenue in the palace was filled with armed men, all devoted to Mariamne. The city was unusually full of soldiers, so distributed that no party could be formed unobserved. All the gates were closed and doubly guarded, and even the Roman legions under Julius virtually defied. These circumstances led her to suspect that Mariamne had seized the kingdom with the assistance of Babarrah, and that she would soon be taken and at least imprisoned. Full of these conjectures, she sought her mother Cypros, who, though in a state of great alarm, was too observant to acquiesce in Salome's suspicions, but bade her be circumspect, since the queen was not only capable and firm, but surrounded by the ablest in the land, and would not hesitate to punish with rigour any one who should make public such sentiments. She expressed her astonishment at the disappearance of Joseph;

and agreed with her daughter to carefully observe every occurrence, and obtain all the information in their power.

On the ensuing day various opinions were agitated among the people, and the latent disaffected spirit began to shew itself. Some were loud in their attachment to the king; others hinted at the murder of Aristobulus, and the justness of Herod's death, supposing, as was reported, that Antony had tortured him; many spoke of Hyrcanus as being their rightful king; while the majority looked to Mariamne.

Two days passed, and no intelligence arrived. The suspense in which the population had been, in great measure, skilfully kept, could no longer be sustained; and the intolerance and fierceness of party-spirit rapidly increased, and infected even the soldiers; so that Babarrah became doubtful of the number on which, in case of emergency, he could depend.

Alexandra had been, at the first receipt of the intelligence, secretly pleased, and looked forward to the throne becoming again the entire possession of her family; but when she was aware of the increasing ferment in the opinions of the people, and the apprehension of Babarrah, her courage failed her, and she dreaded being exposed to the dangers of civil discord. As no information had reached them from Laodicea, the doubts even of Babarrah began to waver, and consequently their anxieties to increase. He advised that no decisive step should be taken with regard to the succession to the regal dignity, since the jealous Roman would probably oppose any one who should assume, or even nominate, the succession.

Alexandra, conscious that Cleopatra would endeavour to obtain the kingdom, secretly determined to try and circumvent her, by alluring the triumvir with Mariamne's transcendent beauty. She proposed more than one consul-

tation, magnified the degree of existing popular agitation, descanted on the known violence and cruelty of the people when excited, and expressed her dread that the royal race would be exterminated by a civil war.

Babarrah owned that Julius, the Roman lieutenant, had officially declared that any attempt to dispose of the kingdom would be deemed an act of rebellion, and punished as such. At this declaration Mariamne's pale cheek was suffused with crimson, and her dilating nostril told the indignation which she felt, but cautiously suppressed. Hyrcanus expatiated on the horrors of civil war, and thought death preferable to being the cause of it. Alexandra availed herself of these sentiments, so favourable to her views, and vehemently urged the necessity and propriety of their all placing themselves under the protection of the Roman eagles. No one assented, but none dissented; even Mariamne, galling as it was to her feelings, knew too well the obstinacy and power of the Roman government, to wish to entail destruction on her people and herself. It was therefore resolved to communicate their intentions to Julius, and secretly prepare to leave the city for the neighbouring camp.

Babarrah saw the good policy of the step, since it would render the appointment of any other to the regal office an act of flagrant injustice; yet he doubted the purity of Alexandra's motives, and feared that it might bring unhappiness on Mariamne.

Preparations were made on the following day for their removal. Salome, through her agents, soon discovered that some momentous step was on the point of being taken; and, by dint of perseverance, ascertained the intentions of the queen. The supposed death of her brother had made her apprehensive; the decisive conduct in seeking protection from the Roman, left her with the prospect of sinking into mediocrity and insignificance, and rendered her feel-

ings of resentment more bitter, since the mortification of impotence was likely to be endured by her if Mariamne were to receive the crown.

Julius was prepared to receive them; and Babarrah had announced to the queen that they were only waiting her commands to leave the city, when a messenger reached the palace with letters from the king, assuring Mariamne not only of his safety, but of the high distinction shewn him by Antony, and the complete refutation of every calumny that had been advanced against him. Mariamne felt joy at the intelligence of his safety, though his return was not anticipated with pleasure, for his horrid orders were fresh in her memory. The instant she received the intelligence, she retired with Babarrah; and immediately afterwards it was announced with pomp and ceremony, and the mourning turned into joy and banqueting. Salome smiled with unusual satisfaction, since she saw that by this change in the posture of affairs, her work of vengeance was half completed. The situation in which she met Joseph, Mariamne's conduct and speech to the guards, her apparent indifference on the receipt of Herod's death, and her subsequent intention to escape,—were so many causes of exhilaration, which was still more elated by the certainty that Babarrah and Dermah would be exposed to the monarch's jealous wrath. Under the mask of unbounded joy at her brother's safety, she revelled in the anticipated delights of vengeance. Alexandra's dread became so great, that she took refuge with her father Hyrcanus, and gave way to forebodings of evil. Babarrah and Dermah saw their danger, but would not allow the least symptom even of transient agitation to be perceived on their countenances.

The fears of Alexandra had increased to so alarming a height, that she appeared to have lost the use of her reason, and talked of imploring the interference of Salome and the

mercy of Herod, and excited considerable fears even in the good Hyrcanus, who convened in the queen's apartment the whole of those concerned in their late intention to escape.

They all remained silent, excepting Alexandra, who wept, wrung her hands, and declared her belief "that Herod would slay them all." Reasoning and expostulation were equally inefficient to suppress her clamours or excite her courage. At length Hyrcanus almost commanded her silence, and thus addressed them —

"My children, few and evil have the days of the years of my life been: I have returned from wandering in the wilderness, and seen again the vision of inheritance, so deem my pilgrimage ended; and therefore I am ready to be gathered unto my fathers. We have been moved by fear to act unwisely and precipitately; and as enemies lurk on every side, the matter may bring down the wrath of the king on us. For you, my children, is my soul troubled; and lest evil should happen to you, I am resolved to take the burden on my own head. Why would you attempt to dissuade me? Is it not better that one should suffer, than evil happen to many? On whom can evil fall better, than on one who hath numbered his days until his strength is but labour and sorrow, who is soon to pass away like a shadow? Honour and obey your father, and listen to him, for he considers your safety as the only remaining blessing that now can happen to him. When the king in his anger shall accuse us, I will bid him make me the scape-goat or the sacrifice of expiation, and either be sent with scoff and scorn from the city to seek a tabernacle in the wilderness, or offer up my life to atone for our folly."

He ceased speaking. His languid eye, which had assumed a more resolute expression, was bent on the ground, and he seemed occupied in silent prayer.

Mariamne gazed on him with affection, and replied —

"Sleep would never again visit my eyes, and my right hand would forget her cunning, were I to suffer thy innocent grey hairs to be brought down with sorrow to the grave. Who could have left the city without the consent of the queen? I commanded preparations to be made: my reasons for so doing I will render unto my lord the king; if he is not satisfied therewith, let him spurn me like Vashti; let him cast me out like Hagar. I will trust in my God, and rather endure shame, hunger, thirst, and be desolate, than the innocent should suffer for my deeds, whether they be good or whether they be evil."

The friends of Mariamne felt their love and admiration for her increase, and were proud of having bestowed it on so noble a being.

Babarrah, whose unchanging eye had become moistened with an involuntary tear that struggled to follow the dictates of nature, said—

"The clouds of adversity should never obscure the radiant light that now beams on us, and proves that there is left one queen of the earth, whose true nobility diffuses a kindred warmth through our souls, and cherishes the dying hope that all below is not false and hollow. Were the spirits of the Maccabean brethren here, they would hail and worship their noble daughter. Never shall the innocent suffer, or the truly noble be wounded for me. I proposed the scheme—I held correspondence with the Roman—I was to have conducted the execution of the plan; and to me, and to me alone, can any blame be justly attached. I will defend myself before my lord the king, and if he deems me wrong, I shall submit to his decree; but I will deny the participation of any other in the intended removal from the city. Had the report of his death been true, that step would have proved the safest and the wisest that could have been adopted."

Dermah, as if unwilling to have his words disputed, added with unusual emphasis —

"My husband has spoken the words of reason, and such as I knew would flow from his soul. I have assisted him in all he did, and, if it be necessary, shall accuse myself to Herod, for I am resolved that no human power shall sever us. If the queen has to give her explanation, and does it before the enemy of her race poisons the royal ear, all will be well: if not so, then come what will. The simoom blast of adversity has long since swept over me, and so parched my soul, that floods of sorrow could never again cause mine eyes to overflow for my own sufferings."

The discussion might have been continued, if an attendant had not called their attention by repeated efforts to gain access to them. On her entering, she prostrated herself before Mariamne, and said —

"The king draweth nigh; and long since, his sister and a great company rode forth to meet him."

This intelligence saddened their countenances. The queen went to put on her best attire to receive him; the others returned to their abodes.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Salome, full of all she had heard and seen, and knowing the value of first impressions, and the effects of suspicion and jealousy on her brother, had ridden as far as Eltekon to meet him. She soon separated him from his retinue, and thus began—

"Peace and honour attend the steps of my lord the king! Great is the joy which succeeds to grief when the false reports of the wicked and designing have caused our tears to flow; such has been mine since I heard that you were safe, and all men satisfied that you had been aspersed."

The monarch, fearing that she was about to enter on a subject which was the phantom of his soul, interrupted her—

"Thanks, Salome; I always knew that your affection was such as a sister's should be, and that you would rejoice at every good which happened to me. How is my beloved Mariamne, and my sons? I shall see her on the palace-top, chiding my delay, and saying, 'Why does he tarry? why are his steeds so slow?' Let us hasten on, for I would meet my love with the speed of the mountain roe."

He touched his steed with the rowel, and would have bounded onward, if Salome had not arrested his speed by saying—

"Ah, fleet must be the steed, my brother, that can overtake a treacherous woman."

Herod stopped short, and exclaimed—

"The import of those words is treason to my ears. Did I hear rightly? Say! what do you mean?"

Salome affected grief, and replied—

"Alas! I always told you that the triumvir loved her."

The king interrupted her by saying, with eager voice—

"Well, what of that? He is with the Parthian, and there may he fall! But why tell me that he loves my Mariamne?"

Salome turned aside, as she replied—

"I cannot be the unwelcome bearer of such intelligence. Go to Jerusalem, and you will soon be informed of it."

The king was by this time worked up to a degree of wrath that made even Salome fear; for his colour came and went, and his eyes flashed fire, while his pale lips quivered as he muttered vengeance. Then, in a voice that made his sister start, he demanded—

"By your loyalty, I command you to disclose all you know."

At the same time he stopped his steed, and waved his hand for his retinue to retire. Salome had recovered her temporary alarm, and was again the cool, determined, revengeful spirit. She bowed her head, and replied—

"Since the king commands, I obey. Mariamne, Alexandra, the faithful Babarrah, and grateful Dermah, with others, have left Jerusalem, and sought the protection of the Roman commander Julius, who I heard had been in constant correspondence with Antony."

At these tidings the blood flushed his cheeks, anger fired his eyes, and he called out, as he dashed the spurs into his courser's sides—

"For Jerusalem!"

Salome was left almost unattended, and all were wondering what had happened thus to excite the monarch's wrath. This Erinnys began to repent that she had not

told her tale in such a manner as to include more of the poison she wished to instil. She had not long to regret her dulness; for in a few minutes Herod came riding towards her alone. His anger no longer seemed a tempest of the soul; his face was of an ashy paleness, his brows were lowering, his mouth drawn close, and determination painted on his countenance. He addressed his sister, as he turned his horse to pursue the same route—

"Tell me all you know of these foul proceedings. My anger was justly excited, and nature in me will have her full sway for a time. I have my duties to fulfil, and therefore must be prepared. When did they leave Jerusalem? Why did they go to Julius, and not to Arabia, with that old priest?"

She replied with precision, tinctured with austerity—

"Sire, affection made me desirous of gently and gradually touching the tenderest bonds of your nature, which in you have been so cruelly and ungratefully lacerated. Now you forget the close degree of kindred that we stand in, and above all my long-tried and unvarying love, and command me to make known all I can tell as a secret of state; I shall obey my lord the king, though reluctantly, because it will fill his heart with grief and indignation. Alas! such cares are our daily lot."

"Sister, forgive my anger; the facts, not you, excited it. I come to receive information from you, not to demand it. I am assured of your love; so freely tell me all that has happened, that my astonishment may not give my enemies cause to rejoice. My heart stops its beating, that I may listen. Come, Salome, be kind, and tell your wounded brother."

"Ah, Herod," replied the artful woman, "you ever held the reins of my heart and tongue, so I will obey you for once reluctantly. Your death was reported; consternation and grief filled the city. Attendants hastened to the

queen's apartments; she was found attired in her robes of state, sitting with anxious looks fixed upon her children, and thus made the weeping women think that she had heard the dire report, and in excess of anguish had forgotten her dress and sleep, and sought with instinctive fondness her children. She started from the ground, and with a loud and wondering voice demanded the cause: when she heard it, she gave one shriek, seized the spear of some fierce Asmonean, and called aloud for Babarrah, vowing to defend herself and babes against the Egyptian queen and Antony. Babarrah was at hand, as if expecting to be summoned, and, *without ceremony, entered your wife's apartment.* In the same breath your queen ordered your uncle, whom you left procurator with her, to be seized and confined."

At these words the listening monarch started, and with a wild and troubled look repeated them —

"Seized and confined! Joseph, my procurator and uncle, to be seized and imprisoned!"

His eyes glanced on Salome's, as if he would read her inmost thoughts; and he added —

"Why did she order him to be seized?"

Salome continued —

"I know not; neither can I tell why she marshalled with her spear a hundred of her guard, and gave her children to their protection."

Herod closed his teeth, and groaned with impatient bitterness; then quickly said —

"What then? go on, go on!"

She remarked —

"Joseph would have doubtless stopped her from leaving Jerusalem, though the report of your death had been true, for more reasons than it would please you to listen to."

He turned towards her, and with tremulous voice said —

"Tell them me; I can bear them."

With an affectation of sacrificing her feelings to her duty, she continued —

"Whose protection could Mariamne think of seeking but the triumvir's, when she sought the guardianship of Julius?"

He stopped her, and observed —

"That does not tell me why Joseph would have detained her; he — yes — he always admired her."

Salome paused, as she caught his words, with —

"Ah! you have saved me the painful trouble of proceeding in this disclosure, which may at last have only appearances to support it. Remember, another Joseph left a portion of his garment in a woman's hands."

The king was violently agitated, as if some internal tortures were racking his soul; then bursting into an agony of wrath, and seizing her rein, exclaimed with choking voice —

"Tell me all you know, or I — I will —"

His hand grasped with a convulsive motion his dagger; Salome grew pale, and said —

"What! Herod, would you kill Salome, who is ready to tell you all she *thinks?*"

He resumed his former attitude, and in a kinder tone answered —

"Good Salome, my soul is harrowed up. O Mariamne — my beloved Mariamne!"

He placed his hand upon his brow, and thoughts of his foul murder of her brother flashed across his mind with a withering blast, and he trembled as if he felt that the hour of retribution had arrived. After a time, he recovered himself, and with intense anxiety required her to continue. She spoke with more caution than before —

"I saw Mariamne hurry through the private passage to

her retiring-room: her manner attracted my attention — she did not perceive me — I went to the private passage, and met Joseph tracing her steps."

Herod shook, while choking sobs burst from his bosom, and some burning tears forced themselves from his eyes: at length he exclaimed —

"A foul devil — my uncle too, so smooth-tongued and respectful — follow the queen my wife with stealing tread through private passages to her Armon — she agitated — guilt in her very steps!"

His feelings were too much affected to permit him to speak for some time; when, with tenderness and tears, he said —

"Poor Mariamne to have fallen so low!"

Then he muttered, as he laughed hysterically —

"Thou shalt ascend unto thy brother."

Large drops of perspiration fell from his brow, and he said, as to himself —

"Yes; he must have told her, and so won her. It was not love, but vengeance; and, to crown her malice, she's gone to Antony. Ah! this is more than I can bear. Curses on them all, I will have vengeance too!"

The latter thoughts were expressed in a tone of wrath; and spurring his steed, he rode away for Jerusalem.

Wishing to enter the city and gain the palace unperceived, he took a different route, passed his attendants, who had waited for him, and soon arrived, by an unfrequented gate, at the palace. With quick, trembling steps and angry look he hastened to the hall, where Mariamne, dressed and surrounded by her attendants, awaited his arrival.

No one observed him soon enough to apprise the queen, and he was in the apartment before she knew he had approached the city. She was sitting near a lattice, looking

towards the hills which he had descended, and now and then a sigh escaped her.

The wondering monarch gazed for a moment in mute surprise at finding her there, and was on the point of clasping her to his bosom, with the first effusions of love, when the recollection of Joseph having followed her flashed into his memory, and prevented him. She arose, and went forward to embrace him. The agitated king withdrew, and taking her hand, said, in a hollow voice —

" Come with me, I have sad tidings for you."

Mariamne for a moment felt her indignation rise at his evident rejection of her embrace; but at his look and words her heart sunk within her, then palpitated with unwonted quickness. By the time they reached her apartment, conscious innocence and nobleness of spirit had restored her to a more composed state. Herod closed the door; then turning towards her fiercely and suspiciously, and with some irony, began —

" Mariamne, I hear that you have sought the protection of those Romans of whom you were wont to speak so kindly."

She looked on him for a moment, when the majesty of her countenance seemed to change the current of his feelings —

" I little thought that my affection would have been treated with scorn, and my feelings outraged by such unbecoming sarcasm. It was reported that you were dead. No contradictory intelligence was received. We dreaded tumult, faction, and civil strife. Our sons are infants; though I hate a Roman and a heathen, for their sakes and your honour, I did intend to seek the protection of Julius. If I erred, it was for want of judgment. When we received the tidings of your safety and accumulated honours, our grief was turned to joy, and our consternation to the tran-

quillity of safety. Has my lord the king any other charge to urge against his wife?"

Herod had kept his eyes fixed on her while she spoke; and as her beauty and indignation kindled with her words, his love and admiration returned with tenfold force; but in an instant his face became suffused; and as he groaned, he looked on her; then paced to and fro; and at last, while he gazed on her and clenched his hands, said —

"No, no! one so fair, so magnanimous, is not guilty."

Mariamne, in an indignant and commanding voice, exclaimed —

"Guilty! Guilty of what? The wretch that has impeached my loyalty is a false and accursed traitor. Herod, never before was an Asmonean accused of treason. The first wretch who has thus impeached your wife shall not go unscathed. Who was it? I will know!"

He paced and turned, and paced again; then, fixing his scrutinising eyes on her, said —

"Did one Joseph ever follow you to your chamber?"

Indignation flashed from her eyes; she started from him, exclaiming —

"Unhand me! Did Joseph ever follow me to where — my chamber? No; if he had, I would have plunged *your dagger* to his heart!"

These words increased his surprise, and called him to a calmer state; and he continued —

"I do not doubt your fidelity, but only ask if Joseph followed you?"

"Your asking, and your manner, imply suspicion. I cannot feel any thing but contempt and utter scorn at your imbecile jealousy."

Herod assumed a more composed look, as he remarked —

"My question is not answered!"

She smiled with all the keen contempt that virtue can add to indignation, and replied—

"It deserved no answer. But lest your jealousy should construe my silence into guilt, I tell you that I know not if he followed me. This I know, that, if either he, or any other living soul, had dared to look on me with unbridled thoughts, I would have denounced him: to have offered me insult, would have ensured him death. By Jehovah, you have foully wronged me; and never more will I call you husband, until you are satisfied that I cannot be unfaithful!"

She turned to go, but he detained her, and asked—

"Why did you imprison Joseph?"

She sarcastically replied—

"Do you think that it was because he was my paramour?"

Stung at the remark, he added—

"Perchance you might have looked for a higher suitor."

Her indignation seemed to threaten to overwhelm her with wrath, but she checked the furious tide, and answered,

"Were I Herod, the king of Judæa, I should be ashamed to feel jealous of a foul murderer, a heathen, the paramour of a queen stained with a *brother's blood.*"

Herod was subdued by those awful words; and conscience, with fiery lashes, made his soul quake with fear. He concealed any outward expression of what he felt, and after a short pause, resumed—

"Why did you go to Julius?"

With firmness she repeated—

"I did not go to him. I intended to seek his protection, since the foul spirit, whom you think I sought, might have dispossessed your children of the throne. I loathe him!"

Again he asked—

"Why did you imprison Joseph?"

She rejoined, with increasing firmness—

"I will not tell you. Send for him here, and ask yourself."

Soon after, she added—

"My lord the king has accused me of a crime worthy of death. I will not be satisfied without complete exculpation before the Sanhedrin, nor without the punishment of my accusers."

Herod came towards her, and, with a more gentle voice, said—

"Beauteous Mariamne, you have been wronged: come again to my arms."

She retired, as she answered with feelings of mingled pity and indignation—

"Nay, nay; think not, though a king, that an Asmonean will stoop so low as to be satisfied with such denial. I will summon the Sanhedrin, I will drink the water of jealousy, and my vow shall be a cherim. I will call even on Herod to produce his witnesses, his accusers, and his proofs of having grounds of jealousy against Antony."

She bowed, and would have left him, but he stopped her again, and with more tender accents, added—

"I have wronged you—my intense love for you has made me fearful that you might love one more deserving than Herod."

Mariamne haughtily demanded—

"Was that one the bestial Antony, or the imbecile Joseph?"

He threw his arms round her, and exclaimed—

"You shall not leave me until you forgive me, until you tell me that you love me. My soul thirsts for your love, as does the famished hart for the brooks of running water."

She, weeping, answered—

" I forgive you. Ah Herod, was your love proved by commanding Joseph, if you were killed by Antony, *to murder me ?*"

He started from her embrace, gazed on her for a moment with a fixed and horrid stare of wonder, and as a convulsive sob burst from him, drew his dagger, and raising it, would have plunged it into her bosom, if her calm and lovely brow, on which was no sign of fear, but rather an expression of reckless tenderness, had not subdued for a moment his furious wrath : the dagger fell from his grasp, he looked on her, sobbed aloud, then tore his hair, beat his breast, and uttered imprecations and cries of anguish, with declarations that Joseph would never have told her the dreadful secret but in her chamber.

She knelt, and as she extended her hands to heaven, and fixed her eyes with reverence on the ground, calmly but fervently exclaimed—

" By the unutterable Name, you wrong me !"

He heeded not her words, but, muttering vengeance, left the armon.

She remained, overcome with astonishment and anguish, on her knees for some time, when a sudden tumult recalled her recollection. She stood for a moment, as undefined and horrid thoughts rushed into her mind ; then with haste sought for Herod. She fell senseless on the ground as she entered the hall of audience, for she saw a soldier holding up the gory head of the unoffending Joseph, to shew the vengeful monarch that his orders had been obeyed.

CHAPTER XIX.

Mariamne, when she revived, remembered nothing that had passed, and sat upon her couch looking vacantly around her. Her ideas gradually resumed their wonted channels, and the sad recollections came flowing into her mind, then bursting on her memory with a torrent's force, overwhelmed her with sorrow; she gasped convulsively and trembled; then, with tears, called for her children, proposed to go to her mother, and asked repeatedly for Hyrcanus, but mentioned not her husband's name. Dermah tried to soothe her; then dismissing the other attendants, addressed her reason, and besought her to prepare against the trials that awaited her.

Mariamne listened, but little heeded the voice of reason, and replied with touching sadness—

"Woe is me now! for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow. I fainted in my sighing, and find no rest."

She stopped, and appeared absorbed in thought; then, as if impelled by some powerful influence, added—

"Behold, that which he hath built he will break down;
That which he hath planted he will pluck up."

The thoughts linked to these last words recalled her to a more composed state, and she spoke some words of affection to Dermah; then dissolving into tears of irrepressible grief, sunk down upon her couch. Even the slumbers that stole over her exhausted frame soothed not the trouble of her soul; for indistinct and mingled incidents of woe harassed her, and she awoke trembling with indefinite sensations of horror. Dermah had sat near her, watching

the agitation of her countenance, and now overcome with grief could no longer sustain her wonted composure, and pressed Mariamne to her beating bosom, while gushing tears fell fast from her eyes. Mariamne was touched with the sympathy of her friend, and returning her embrace, would not for a time unfold her arms.

In the evening her children were brought; though the sight of them renewed her tears, it stimulated her to exertion. She sent messages of consolation to her mother; and learning that Herod had left Jerusalem for the army, she resolved on the means of insuring the safety of Hyrcanus.

On the following day she summoned Babarrah and Dermah into her presence, and, without giving them the reasons for her conduct, besought them to assist her in urging Hyrcanus either to return to Babylon, or throw himself on the protection of Malchus. They saw, from the earnestness of her manner, that she was impelled by sufficient reasons; and it being in accordance with their own views, readily promised their utmost assistance. Babarrah at once said, that he would ensure him horses and protection, if he acquiesced in their proposal before the return of the king. In private, Babarrah warned him of the danger in which they all lived, excepting Mariamne, and even strongly inferred that his grandson had been murdered at the monarch's instigation, and that their safety depended on their absence; he added, that the queen was safe, unless Salome continued to undermine the affection of Herod, and poison his confidence.

Mariamne loved Hyrcanus for the qualities of his heart, while she deplored the inferiority of his natural understanding. He had been to her an affectionate and indulgent protector, and in every instance sought her happiness and the aggrandisement of his family. Though he was lodged in the palace, and treated with the highest distinction, she

did not think him happy, and now doubted if he were safe; and therefore determined to use every effort to place him without the reach of danger. They were alone; and she thus pursued her purpose —

" My beloved father, it long was near my heart to have you here, that your latter days might be passed in peace, dwelling on Sion, and having before your eyes the Mount Moriah, calling to your memory the glorious vision that in the days of our fathers appeared there; and my mother and myself near, to administer to your comforts, in gratitude for all your parental kindness. Now I desire your departure, though it will cut me to the soul to separate from the only remnant of our race, and to think that you are in a stranger's land, and dependent on foreign hands for comfort in sickness and affliction. My mother, since the death of Aristobulus, is miserable here; and being now unjustly confined, is encouraging an increasing hatred of the king that may lead to evil. She wishes to accompany you. Malchus will protect you, and Babarrah convey you to his capital. I will prepare a fit present for the Arabian king; and as he is avaricious, hold out to him a hope of receiving more. When will you leave Jerusalem?"

Hyrcanus looked on Mariamne until the tears trembled in his eyes, then replied—

" From the manner, my much-loved child, in which you have spoken, I perceive that the subject is not new to you, and that the applications of the noble Babarrah and his wife are known to you. How can I leave my only remaining child here; for my daughter Alexandra will, I hope, escape with me, surrounded by dangers and enemies that thirst for blood? I am ready to leave this pilgrimage, and be gathered unto my fathers, and fain would die in Jerusalem. No; I cannot, I will not, leave you."

He bent upon her neck, and wept. Mariamne's resolu-

tion for his safety was not to be shaken by his tears, and though affected, she restrained her feelings, and thus continued—

"Hyrcanus, I have known the depth and sincerity of your love. Your presence here is fraught with danger to yourself and to my mother—perchance to me. Prove that your affection has undergone no diminution, by following the advice of those who are your friends, and quitting Jerusalem until happier times return."

The old man shook his silvered hair and beard, and sadly answered—

"Phraätes honoured me, my people did all they could to make my exile happy, but I thought of my children; and 'by the rivers of Babylon, I sat down and wept, when I remembered thee, O Zion.' Like our captive fathers, I prefer 'Jerusalem above my chief joy.' Who can be my enemy? I only ask to dwell here in peace, and then to sleep with my fathers; and, alas! alas! with my youthful children who have died before me. My only daughters are your mother Alexandra and yourself. I will stay; and if it pleases my Creator to call me away, I shall cheerfully obey him, if I die in the blessed 'inheritance of peace.'"

She wept in bitterness of sorrow at his resolution.

CHAPTER XX.

Mariamne smiled no more; poignant anguish racked her soul, and hopeless misery spread a chill and dreary waste of woe far and wide before her. Her race was no longer known in Israel; her brother had fallen a victim to an early tomb; Hyrcanus and her mother were prisoners and in danger; her friends were in jeopardy; she was begirt with fell and remorseless enemies; her husband had suspected her of infidelity, and, in his headlong fury, sacrificed an innocent victim to his jealousy, thus proving that the fierce and sanguinary dispositions had, like a legion of infernal spirits, obtained the mastery over the few remaining and better feelings, and would soon whelm him in an abyss of crime and misery, as he held almost uncontrolled dominion.

She did not see him after the death of Joseph; and, in addition to all she suffered, was harassed by the corroding vexation of suspense. Her children no longer yielded her pleasure, while her affection was increased by apprehension, until she longed to "flee away with them and be at rest." Even her fervent piety was so overwhelmed by the weight of misery, that, for a time, her mind yielded to the deepest dejection, and was a prey to silent, hopeless despair.

Dermah tried to soothe and rouse her to exertion, for the sake of her children, but offered her not even the consolation of hope. She saw that Herod had commenced his dire career, and that death alone would stop him. Her line of conduct had been adopted with the concurrence of Babarrah; it accorded with their characters, and was pre-

liminary to their proposing a plan, by which, at least, the safety of the queen might be secured.

Salome, though aware that half her work of vengeance was completed, felt alarm at the dreadful effects she had produced, and left Jerusalem, that she might, like the serpent whose poison-fang was exhausted, renew her venom and her courage, when removed from the sight of her victim.

Cypros remained within her armon in sorrow and fear, and keeping her mind in a state of doubt on the recent events, not without suspecting that Salome had been the accidental instigator of Herod's fatal anger.

As no meeting had taken place between Mariamne and her husband, none of his family inquired for her. She passed her days with Alexandra, Hyrcanus, and Dermah. The former had become more weak and fearful than before, and began to look on her daughter as the cause of all her misery, and sometimes referred to her hasty betrothment: more than once she wrung the afflicted heart of Mariamne with bitterer anguish, by inferring that she had not been sufficiently circumspect, considering the character of her husband; and oftentimes regretted that her love for her brother had induced her to express her admiration of him in unguarded terms, thus harrowing up her mind with horrid thoughts of the possibility of her husband's guilt. Hyrcanus in vain attempted to correct her; fear and selfishness had so completely filled her mind, that he had no control over her.

Months passed in this miserable manner, when Mariamne received a kind and repentant letter from Herod, containing protestations of his love, and begging her to prepare for the reception of the queen of Egypt. Mariamne had recovered her vigour of mind, though her heart was broken with sorrow, and determined to exert

herself, since it might be a means of obtaining protection for Hyrcanus, and of removing any passing doubt of her conduct that might exist among the people.

The wily Egyptian had reached Jericho, and remained there some days, arranging with Herod the amount of the tribute to be paid by him for the balsam-gardens and surrounding district, which the triumvir had given to her.

The delusions of policy, ambition, and crime, had indurated the feelings and lulled the conscience of the king. Although he paced the margin of the pool where he murdered Aristobulus, he felt no remorse, but drove the recollection from his mind with the forced belief, that the safety of himself and kingdom required the sacrifice which the folly of the youth had entailed on him. It was on the same spot that he doubted whether he would permit the vicious Cleopatra to be his concubine, or would rid the world of so vile a pest. He was inclined to the latter proceeding; but seeing the danger of the enterprise, resolved to consult his friends.

As no woman resided in the palace, he ordered Ananeel, Babarrah, Sohemus, and a Parthian chief who detested Cleopatra, to meet him at midnight in the most secluded recess of the armon. The room was large and lofty, the walls were hung with purple velvet, and ample curtains of the same texture, bordered with gold, fell in heavy folds, and divided it from the more spacious apartment without: it was a room in the centre of another, the sides of which were composed of the richest hangings; round them were low cushions, the carpet was of silk and wool, and in the centre was a low table surrounded with couches, on which stood one small lamp, emitting so feeble a light, that the distant parts of the room were veiled in gloom. At this table, the council, composed of the king and those summoned by him, sat in deep debate.

Herod, leaning forward from his couch, holding the edge of the table with his left hand, was watching the sycophantic Ananeel as he offered his opinion. Babarrah reclined on Herod's right, and was leaning on his left hand, somewhat turned away from the king. His close-shut mouth and fixed eye indicated the firmness of his nature; and a careful observer would have detected a suppressed expression of contempt, as he listened to the words of the now exalted Pharisee. The head of Sohemus was bent forward, and his brow covered with his hand, while the lower portion of his face was tinged with light, as if he was attentively listening to the speaker. The Parthian was twisting the handle of his dagger and smiling, as if reckless of what might be decided on, as he lounged on the silken couch looking towards Herod.

The substance of their consultation may be thus briefly stated.

Herod informed them that he had required their attendance to ask their advice as to the best mode of preserving his own life, and the tranquillity of his kingdom; adding, with affected moderation—

"That pest of the world is here, not to collect her revenue, but to seek for grounds of complaint to Antony. She has endeavoured to allure me to her embraces by her wanton conduct, that she might bring down the vengeance of her paramour on my people. We know that she has already induced the Roman to bestow on her some of our rightful territory, that she is now attempting to obtain Arabia, and would, if she could destroy me, seize on Judæa, and convert the holy city into a receptacle for her reptile gods. Is it not, my well-tried friends, the duty of a ruler to wisely anticipate evil, and check it before it is grown too strong to defy resistance? Day by day she weaves a closer web about her paramour, and after robbing him of all

his power, will suck his blood. While she is thus trammelling the mighty victim, she must feed on those of less power; her last glut was on Lysanias—her Syrian realm is still reeking with his blood. Shall Judæa reek with mine?"

While he spoke, Ananeel had groaned, and exhibited signs of great impatience; on the utterance of the last words he rose from his couch, and said, in an under tone, and with affected concern—

"As an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad, therefore the Lord thy God will be with thee. Now, therefore, let thine enemies, and them that seek evil, suffer the just punishment that our father David, a prophet of Israel, was about to inflict on Nabal. Our 'all-weighty traditions,' and the law, tell us that all things come to pass as Providence directeth; and so the free will of man followeth the intentions of Providence. Ahab, the idolater and heathen worshipper, was stirred up by Jezebel. Since the days of those abominations of Israel, their like hath not been seen until now. O king, thou art as an angel for knowledge, and so knowest that the words of the Scribes are lovely even above the law—great is the mystery of their sayings; but sure it is, that the souls of the wicked inhabit for ever new bodies, and are curses on the earth. It seemeth to me, and others yet more learned in the traditions and the law, that Ahab and Jezebel are again upon the earth—if so, let, as the Lord sayeth, the dogs eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Blessed is the king for ever!"

Although Herod knew that the hypocrite had spoken according to the tenets of his sect, and was pleased with the inference to be deduced from his speech, he could scarce restrain a smile: he suppressed it, and turning to Babarrah, bade him give his opinion.

The Arab bowed his head, then rose and said—

" May wisdom and virtue be the consequences of our debate! I know nothing of traditions, and am equally unskilful in detecting whose soul, that pre-existed, is again on earth, in another body and with another name. This I know, the lives of kings are sacred, and must not be sacrificed for the sake of policy. If they trample on the rights of men, drive them from their thrones. Murder, by the Jewish law, must be punished with death."

Herod appeared tranquil, though his heart beat, and his eye could not remain opposed to the eagle-glance of the proud Babarrah, who continued—

" The Egyptian has imbrued her hands in a brother's and a sister's blood, and slaked her thirst for it by many a known and suspected murder; but she does not live under the Jewish law, and therefore is not amenable to it. The grounds for suspecting that she aims at our monarch's life are not sufficient to sanction her being slain to save him. If she attempts to seize his territory, he has valour and captains enough to resist it, without the sinister means that Ananeel, by inference, proposes. As a matter of policy, it seems fraught with danger rather than safety, for the jealous revengeful Roman would erase Judæa from his roll of kingdoms, and slay her royal race. My counsel is, to let the Egyptian queen pass with attendance and respect to her country; for on her safety depends the existence of our king and his dominions."

The Parthian and Sohemus warmly seconded the noble Arab; and Herod, chagrined and disappointed, was left to reflect on what had passed, and decide on the course he would pursue.

He sat ruminating, and fostering suspicions against Babarrah, whom he now looked on as a spy marked for future scrutiny, as one not zealous in his interest, and too imbecile for a friend in times of such perplexity and danger; he

wished him removed from his court, and thought of sending him to Arabia in case of war, and intrusting him with some command, if he gained any accession of territory: he determined on never consulting him again in any great emergency.

On the following morning Salome reached the city, for the ostensible purpose of attending on Cleopatra, but with the intention of attempting to undermine her favourable inclinations towards the family of Mariamne. As soon as the king was informed of her arrival, he summoned her, and thus expressed the thoughts which were the uppermost in his mind.

"Salome, though this crocodile and her slimy brood have trailed themselves over my fairest province, to devour and pollute its fruits, and have leagued to destroy me, that ungrateful Arab, Babarrah, has so opposed the just intention I had, of summoning her to trial for the bloody thought that I must entertain her, and see the mixers of poisoned bowls and the ready assassins beard me in my palace, and that too under the auspices of their queen, seeking my life by luring me to her cursed embrace."

She ironically replied—

"Babarrah shield you from danger! Babarrah shew zeal in protecting your sacred person from the assassin's hand—he who was in your armon—he who proposed to your wife to fly from Jerusalem—he who has an evil eye, who comes from a race sworn to avenge an insult, and was once your slave! Brother, think not that such a man will counsel you to aught but death. I repeat, he went without ceremony into your armon: a greater king than Herod would prevent a repetition of such insult."

He appeared thoughtful, then replied—

"That Babarrah is not the firm friend I believed him to be, is now evident; but his entering Mariamne's room was

in a case of apparent emergency; his own wife was there. I have wronged the woman to whom my very soul is bound, and shall deem my honour attacked if she is reflected on."

Salome was a little abashed at this cold reply, but immediately recovering her composure, said—

"I hope you wronged your beauteous wife; I did not reflect on her, but merely pointed out the opinion entertained of your former slave's presumption in unceremoniously entering the armon of the queen."

He was chagrined at her remark, but made no reply.

Salome was desirous that Cleopatra should go to Jerusalem, because she knew it would annoy Mariamne; she also wished to prevent her brother going there before her, since his meeting the queen for the first time in public after their quarrel, and the death of Joseph, would distress her victim; she therefore turned her conversation to that subject, and asked—

"Have you invited Cleopatra to visit you at Jerusalem?"

He hastily replied—

"She might remain here until the waters of the Nile reached her, before I would invite her to my capital; but she journeyed hither for that purpose among others, and unless I invite her, she will come unasked. I wrote to Mariamne, bidding her to order preparations for her reception."

"You of course will precede her, and be ready to receive her in your palace."

He smiled somewhat contemptuously as he said—

"She has stolen the fairest garden in my kingdom; and lest she should steal my crown, I will watch her by day and night, and never quit her until she is on the confines of Judæa. How could you ask so wise a question?"

"To know what duties I should prepare to execute, that no service on my part might be wanting, though Babarrah should fail in his."

"Thanks, Salome: I must now ascertain when she will pollute my capital; in the mean time messengers must be sent to inform Mariamne that she is to be received in state."

Salome went on her way rejoicing, devising how she should see Cleopatra alone, and undermine her friendly intentions towards Hyrcanus. She also anticipated seeing the first meeting between Mariamne and her husband.

On the following evening a messenger reached the palace with the information that Cleopatra intended to arrive on the ensuing day. Herod, in his letter to the queen, had urged the propriety of her being received with all possible splendour and urbanity. Mariamne issued orders to the chief officers of state, excepting the priests, whom she conceived the law would not permit to receive in their sacred habits an idolatrous ruler. Dermah was in attendance; and after her orders had been issued, she turned to her, and said with a look of sorrow mingled with indignation—

"Alas, my friend, I never thought that a princess of Israel would be required to receive with urbanity an idolater, a vicious, degraded woman, and a murderess. I am fallen, fallen indeed."

She wept not: at first a look of anguish darted from her eyes, and her features were contracted, while her bosom heaved with confined respiration; suddenly the blood rushed into her pallid cheek, and an irrepressible sob burst from her, while she exclaimed, as she covered her brow and turned away her face—

"Oh, this is degradation, to which the bitter draught of death would be sweet!"

She seemed struggling to subdue the violence of her feeling, but was unable, and added, in a louder tone—

"I cannot, I will not receive her as he directs."

At that instant Salome entered through the opening of the curtains, and appeared to look with surprise on the angry queen, who seeing her, turned quickly towards her, and in a commanding voice exclaimed—

"What! am I to be exposed to the intrusions and insults of every follower of our court? Though the sister of the king, I will not suffer it; I command you to quit my presence, nor again appear in it before I give you permission!"

She would have replied; but Mariamne continued, as her anger rose—

"Do you hesitate to obey me?"

Salome remained looking on her with eyes flashing fire, and her pale lips quivering with rage.

The queen seized an ebony staff, and struck a gong with all her force, and in an instant the rushing tread of an hundred men in armour sounded through the avenues and spacious halls of the royal palace. Salome saw her danger, was terrified at the anger of the offended queen, and at the clang and approach of the royal guard, and stood trembling, unable to retire. Dermah availed herself of the few moments between the act and arrival of the guard to hasten without the armon and bid them retire, telling them that the alarm arose from accident. Mariamne waved her hand for Salome to depart, and went herself to a more retired apartment, followed by Dermah.

It was some time before Salome recovered from her astonishment, or was aware of the agitation of the inhabitants in the palace; and then it was to endure all the pangs of rage with a desire of immediate revenge, and a feeling of her impotency. Numberless schemes, each more frantic and horrible than the last, quickly succeeded each

other; at length, when her force was somewhat spent, and her blood more tranquil, she calmly brooded over her means of vengeance. She thought of Herod's jealousy, his love of power, his increasing suspicion of all his officers, and conceived she might include among them even Mariamne, and use the words she had heard when entering the room, and her violent conduct, as means to fulfil her wishes.

Mariamne's spirit was roused, and she felt no regret at what had happened; and gave no directions to intimate to Salome her desire that she would be ready to receive Cleopatra.

Towards the evening of the ensuing day, a quick succession of messengers brought intelligence of the approach of Herod and the Egyptian queen. A numerous body of Idumean cavalry, variously caparisoned, preceded and cleared the road; some were dressed in polished mail, adorned with curious work; others in the skins of wild animals, ornamented with silver or shining metals; and some in the lighter garb and flowing dresses of the East. After these came the royal guard on foot, composed of hastati and velites; then the officers of state on Arabian horses; after them, on Macrobian steeds of jetty black, with flowing manes and tails, rode the Ethiopian attendants of the queen, dressed in white, carrying wands of ebony, and each wearing a hieroglyphic on his head-dress, to which a mystic meaning was attached. At some distance followed the Egyptian queen, borne by fifty athletic men, in a car of sculptured ivory, surrounded by curtains of Tyrian silk. At regular intervals, attendant slaves waved fans saturated with cool refreshing odours, and distant soft recorders regulated the march. Herod rode near her; he wore a breastplate of gold, and a helmet of the same metal studded with jewels, and surmounted by a crest of exquisite device and workmanship; his purple robe waved to the

breeze, over the back of his impatient milk-white steed. Behind them came a numerous retinue of Egyptian and Syrian horse; the former dressed in white linen, silver breastplates, caps low behind, interwoven with silver bars, and each carrying a long white spear; the latter were more meanly dressed, and wore quivers on their shoulders, and scymitars by their sides: they looked a swarthy, sullen race, and deemed themselves but little more than captives of the Egyptian who had usurped their kingdom. The procession was closed by a mixed multitude on various animals.

They entered the city through the golden gate, and wound their way to the left towards the palace. The houses were covered with people, gazing on the procession; but, to Herod's great chagrin, no acclamations welcomed his return, and the clarions of his guard were re-echoed as from a deserted region.

Cleopatra was observed to breathe quicker, and cast suspicious glances on the king.

On arriving at the palace, she alighted, and conducted by Herod, passed through spacious halls lined with soldiers, attendants, and officers of state. Herod expected that Mariamne would have met them beneath the eastern portico, but she was not, until they reached the hall of state, warned of the king's arrival. The hall was vast, built of Parian marble; the lofty roof was fretted with gold, and supported by pillars of porphyry; the pavement was of tessellated marble, mingled with onyx; the doors were of sculptured ivory. At the end of this spacious hall was suspended from the roof a curtain of purple velvet, bordered with gold; before it, raised above the pavement, were three ivory thrones on a carpet of silk and gold.

As Herod was leading Cleopatra through the throng of prostrate nobles, captains, and attendants, the curtains were

opened, and Mariamne, followed by her train, advanced towards them.

She was arrayed in a vest and robe of the purest white, with sandals of silk, bound with silver thongs; on her brow shone a frontlet-jewel, surmounted by a diadem glittering with diamonds. As she advanced, the graceful dignity of her mien evidently attracted the notice of her royal guest. Her face was deadly pale, and her eyes too truly told the calm and settled sorrow of her soul; while the composed majesty of her look commanded even the respect of the shameless Egyptian queen. Herod was surprised, and felt overawed, though love was thrilling through his veins, as he gazed on his queen advancing in all the might of loveliness and injured virtue.

Cleopatra was attired in a robe of white byssus, interwoven with silver; on her bosom was embroidered in precious stones the hawk, a sacred emblem of her god Osiris; a locust of emerald and diamond adorned the front of each sandal; the edges of her robe and tunic were inwrought with hieroglyphic figures; on her head she wore a lunette, indicative of her rank among the initiated, bordered by the Isiac aspic wreath, surmounted by a light Egyptian crown. Her gait, though commanding, possessed not that grace for which the beautiful Asmonean's form was so conspicuous; her features were expressive, for her eyes evinced quickness of apprehension, and were evidently tutored to adapt their expression to any intended purpose; her nose was short, and indicated shrewdness and passion; her mouth was small, and, like her eyes, could vary its expression from the most playful smiles to an implacable, imperious fierceness; her complexion was a contrast to the pure marble fairness of Mariamne, being dark, and not so clear as when she was in the spring of youth.

Mariamne received her husband's hand, who kissed

hers, and as she bent, placed it on his forehead, as a token of respect, while his eyes seemed to plead to her for forgiveness; her brow underwent no change, and turning to Cleopatra, she inclined her head, and said, as she placed her right hand on her bosom —

"Queen of Egypt, I salute you; may virtue and honour lead you to the paths of peace!"

The gentle and impressive manner in which she uttered these words, and their pointed import, rendered the Egyptian less at her ease than she desired; she replied, observing the same token of respect—

"Queen of Judæa, may peace await thee, and love and friendship be thy handmaids!"

At those words, a look almost of anguish crossed Mariamne's brow, and a sigh was hardly suppressed.

Herod placed Cleopatra on the centre ivory throne, and seated himself on her right hand, while Mariamne occupied the other. The guards and attendants of each monarch were marshalled behind their respective sovereigns. Mariamne did not address her sister queen; but, at her command, water in a crystal vase was brought to her, and odours sprinkled over her head and around her seat. Herod in vain attempted to dispel the chagrin she evidently endured at her cold reception, and of which he partook. The princes and rabbis did obeisance; and many who placed gifts of price at the feet of the Egyptian monarch, were honoured by her notice, and passed on. After a time, clarion, harp, and psaltery sounded, and a train of richly dressed slaves came in, bearing various costly presents from the king to Cleopatra. Mariamne had provided one of the most homely nature, merely to fulfil the usual custom, and still looked sorrowful and silent. Mingled feelings of anger, love, and mortification, harassed the king so deeply, that his powers of dissimulation could not prevent his

shewing what he felt. When the banquet was announced, Mariamne was compelled to conduct her guest to her retiring-room. She did it with grace, and even filled the golden basin with scented waters for her use; but her calm and majestic manner overawed even the bold paramour of Antony, and checked her wonted volubility. They returned together to the banquet.

In the centre of the room, raised above the surrounding pavement, was the royal table; it was made of citron-wood, supported by stands of ivory; around it were silken couches, inwrought with gold, on which the guests reclined; on the middle step were slaves, exciting odours from vases and censers containing various herbs, and others holding golden basins of cold water. Around the hall were many tables for the honoured guests, who reclined on couches so placed that their faces were never turned away from the royal party. The monarchs, with Cypros, Hyrcanus, and some of the regal race, had scarcely taken their couches, when Herod asked for Salome; Mariamne, without a change of countenance, looked on him, and immediately rejoined—

"Where is my mother Alexandra?"

The blood mantled Herod's face; but dissembling, he regretted their absence, and immediately did the honours of hospitality to his illustrious guest, who was occupied in observing all that transpired, that she might, if possible, avail herself of the evident disunion among them to obtain the kingdom for herself.

Herod tried in vain to keep up the spirit of conversation. Mariamne was inflexible. Hyrcanus was evidently oppressed with care, and Cypros nervous and perplexed. The observations were few and unconnected; even the varied distant instrumental and vocal music hardly served to dispel the increasing gloom. Though Herod felt great vexation, he could not help expecting that such un-

accustomed heaviness would curtail the visit of his unwelcome guest; and if his vanity had not been piqued, he would have rejoiced. The festivities of the evening, in spite of every attempt, wore heavily away. After they had separated for the night, Herod repaired to Mariamne's apartment. She looked on him, but spoke not: at length he asked—

"What can all this import? Why, my beloved Mariamne, are you so pale?"

She calmly and sorrowfully answered—

"Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me."

He loved her too well not to be affected at her sorrow, yet he harshly replied—

"I only proved my respect and love by punishing as he deserved the prying, insulting Joseph, who was tracking you where he knew he could not tread without forfeiting his life."

She raised her eyes, and looking at him, said—

"That man, whose innocent blood you shed in a paroxysm of jealousy and anger, was your devoted advocate and friend, and told me your horrid order as a proof of your love for me. I left him to conceal my grief and wonder. *If* he followed me, it was to urge his suit for you."

He paced the room, somewhat agitated; then turning abruptly, said—

"My spotless, much-loved wife, forget the deed—be certain he deserved his fate."

She replied, with more animation and firmness—

"Sooner could I forget Jerusalem than that deed, your false accusation, and treachery towards me. I am certain that he was innocent, and that your uncle's blood will be required at your hands."

He curbed his rising wrath, and turned the subject of his discourse—

"Why have you treated the illustrious queen of Egypt so inhospitably and contrary to my orders?"

A blush suffused her cheek, and her eyes assumed a look of surprise not unmixed with anger, as she replied—

"Illustrious queen! the glory of her country, as her name imports, but in reality its shame—the vile perdition of every realm and every prince to whom she has yet been known."

With indignation lighting up her countenance, she continued—

"Not Herod, my king and husband, shall be obeyed, when ordering an Asmonean princess to receive urbanely a monster stained with a brother's blood, whose sister's spirit calls for the punishment of her murderer, and who is an accursed idolater! Know that such monsters are not society for me; and if I had not thought your safety somewhat dependent on her, I would have spurned her from my palace, instead of tolerating her presence."

Herod was more than surprised at her manner, for some of the words cut him to the soul, and for a moment inflamed the scorpion-stings of conscience. They soon subsided; his anger rose, and he asked—

"Have you spurned my sister too?"

With equal firmness, she rejoined—

"If I had, it would have been only a portion of her deserts. She intruded into my private apartment, insolently disobeyed me, and I have forbidden her my presence. Have you confined, spurned, insulted your former benefactress and patroness, my mother Alexandra?"

Herod's anger had been with difficulty subdued; this speech roused it, and he vehemently replied—

"By heaven, I will not thus be questioned — thus

insulted! trust not too much either to my love or to your beauty. Doris was at least obedient and affectionate."

Mariamne solemnly and with great composure answered him—

"I rely not on your love, and disregard my faded beauty; and feel so little for my accuser, the insulter of my mother and the submissive attendant of that Egyptian serpent, that I would fain exchange dwellings with poor Doris, and now ask your permission so to do."

Herod was astonished; pique half subdued his anger; he advanced to take her hand, but she withdrew, saying, as she left him—

"When you know how to value Mariamne, and pursue the dictates of justice and reason, she will again receive you as her husband."

Before he could collect himself, she had departed, and called her women. He sent for her, but she peremptorily refused to attend him; and he was compelled to go away mortified and overcome. While chafing with anger, he summoned Salome, who had taken care to make herself acquainted with all that had publicly transpired, and to be in the palace. He hastily asked—

"Why were you not here to receive my guest? The laws of hospitality have been broken through. If you were not able to be present at our arrival, why were you absent from the banquet?"

Salome, with a serious and concerned expression, rejoined—

"Sire, I deeply regret the dishonour that has happened to our house: never were the laws of hospitality broken through before by us."

Then, with a look inferring a deep sense of injury, she added—

"I should have been obedient to your instructions, if your queen had not banished me the court."

"Banished you my court!" repeated the monarch, with an emphasis and manner that clearly told the angry feeling with which he heard the words.

Salome caught the tone, and added—

"That was not all the insult heaped on the sister of my lord the king. The mighty Asmonean acted the part of some rebel chieftain of her race, and roused the palace; the alarm-gong was sounded, and the guards came rushing in to seize their monarch's sister."

She stopped, and looked with an inquiring glance on Herod, who was evidently much surprised, but only said—

"What more occurred?"

Salome answered with feigned apprehension—

"I do not know—for I was too terrified to observe; but I think that Dermah sent them back."

Herod, with a voice of authority, demanded—

"What was the cause of this unbecoming broil within my palace?"

She replied—

"Do not be angry with me—nay, I pray you, let the matter pass without farther notice. I was hastening to the armon to deliver your orders to the queen, and reached her second room too suddenly."

Herod looked at her with an expression of mistrust, and asked—

"How too suddenly? What do you mean? Tell me, I command you."

These last words were pronounced in a loud imperious voice. She assumed a look of alarm, and said—

"Oh! be not so violent, my brother—I would not give you uneasiness—you know that I would rather suffer."

With evident agitation, and a still louder voice, he exclaimed—

"Curse your mysteries! is not a man to know what happens in his armon? Answer me, I insist."

Her alarm apparently increased, and sinking on her knee, she said, as if it were drawn from her by terror—

"I only heard the too proud Mariamne vow to her attendant that she would not obey my lord the king her husband."

He closed his lips, paced the room, then said—

"Salome, keep your own counsel; be splendidly arrayed to-morrow, and assist me in doing the honours of hospitality to that intruding, avaricious Egyptian. Now leave me."

He saluted her, and she went smiling to her room.

He, being left, ruminated angrily on the event. It appeared to him that Mariamne had assumed more authority than was consistent with his views; he was chagrined at her displaying what he deemed haughtiness towards his family, and determined to shew his disapprobation of her conduct by neglect, and at the same time pay every honour to his guest, taking care that his attention to Cleopatra and his sister should be made known to her.

Herod was unwilling to gratify the curiosity of Cleopatra by permitting her to visit the Temple, because he knew that her desire to see it arose from an intention to take cognisance of the riches it contained. She over-ruled every objection that was urged on account of the difference of their religion, and the laws relating to aliens from the worship of Israel, and quoted the names of the various rulers who had seen the interior, and inferred an intention she had formed of visiting it with Antony. Herod was obliged to yield, and soon after the morning sacrifice, they went with a great retinue to Mount Moriah.

Flowers and carpets were spread along the private way that led from the palace to the western entrance of the Temple. On entering this gate they turned to the right, traversed the southern side beneath the portico, then the eastern side beneath the piazza of Solomon. As soon as they reached the beautiful gate wrought of Corinthian brass, Ananeel intimated to his sovereign the necessity of separating.

Salome, with numerous attendants, accompanied Cleopatra to the court of the women; leaving all the Gentiles without, they passed beneath the gate-way ascending the fifteen steps, and crossed the court crowded with worshippers. In front of them arose the magnificent portico at the entrance. Within was displayed to Cleopatra's longing eyes, some portion of its treasures, consisting of votive offerings. The sun gleamed on vines of gold, wrought with exquisite skill, embracing the lofty pillars, and hanging in the luxuriant profusion of the natural tree; the grapes were formed of various stones in imitation of the fruit in its several stages to maturity, and the golden stem sprung from beneath the pavement as if from its native mine. On the golden table given by Pompey were vases, models of the holy Temple, and other gifts of the same metal and of equal beauty. On the sides were suspended helmets, bucklers, breastplates, arms and trophies, all the spoils of victory, and a vast profusion of other precious things: the back-ground was formed of the great Babylonian veil or curtain, radiant with the morning beams. She stood for some time wondering, then felt an intense wish to possess them, and resolved to win them if possible from her powerful paramour. She advanced and joined the king on the twelve steps of the portico. Before entering the holy house, they turned and saw beneath them the altar still filling the calm atmosphere immediately above it with

a spiring column of smoke; near it numerous priests, dressed in the close linen tunic adorned with the typical fringe, a girdle, and a tiara of twisted linen folds, were performing their allotted duties; many others of different ranks were assembled to attend and reverence the king. Beyond this space was assembled a great multitude of men of various ranks, in their national costume, and bending in obeisance to the monarchs as they looked towards them. Without this vast concourse, and separated by a low wall and a flight of steps, reaching the whole breadth of the court, with a lofty and highly ornamented portal in the centre, were thousands of women closely veiled; from among whom rose a murmur, as if inquiring for their queen, and seeking information from each other respecting Cleopatra. Still farther removed, and down another series of steps, was a mixed assemblage in the court of the Gentiles, doing obeisance to their rulers. The Egyptian retinue filled the way terminating in the beautiful gate. Beyond them the magnificent piazza of Solomon, supported by ranges of lofty pillars, extended the whole eastern side; from the great elevation on which they stood, the summits of the walls crowned with massive towers were seen, covered with marshalled warriors, glittering in polished armour. Half of the vale, with its silver stream, could be discerned beyond, leaving a gulf between; then rose the Mount of Olives, covered with gardens, vineyards, and the rich productions of the genial clime. To the right were lofty hills with varying outline, concealing Bethlehem from the view: still farther to the south, the summits of the mountains beyond the Dead Sea faded in the distance.

Towards the north were seen, over the courts of the Temple, the lofty and spacious tower of Antonia; then the flat roofs of the houses covered with people; and without the city, the tombs of the judges, and a dark wood of olives.

The triple wall on the northern extremity was studded with armed men: far beyond them were hills and valleys teeming with flocks, corn, fruits, and the peaceful dwellings of the shepherds and tillers of the soil.

Herod observed his guest, while examining more closely the treasures in the portico, and was so alarmed at her admiration, that he regretted she ever came.

The Babylonian silken veil, inwrought with various blended hues, and edged with glittering gold and crystal, was drawn aside, and they would have passed into the sanctuary, if the effulgent light that burst upon them had not compelled them to incline their heads and shield their sight; at the same moment, a shout of acclamation from the assembled people made even the distant hills re-echo. Cleopatra expressed her wonder, and still shielding her eyes, entered with quicker step. The sides and pillars were sheathed with gold, the cornices and entablatures were of embossed silver, and the pavement of the whitest marble. The golden vessels and precious implements, used on the great feasts, were arranged in order; near the Holy of Holies stood the golden altar of incense, and the golden table containing the shew-bread; and coffers of gold and ivory were placed in niches for the reception of treasure. Before them were the veils that divided the sanctuary from the Holy of Holies. Cleopatra was advancing towards them, when Ananeel arrested her steps: she became deadly pale, when he and other priests exclaimed, "To touch the veil is death!" She returned with Herod, amazed and even awe-struck at the dread solemnity, yet simplicity, of the Jewish Temple, when compared with the rites and labyrinths of those in Egypt.

The scene of the preceding night had given a violent shock to Mariamne, and she had been unable to leave her couch; Cleopatra availed herself of her absence to endea-

vour to wind Herod to her purposes. She allured him to the summit of the palace, and beneath the silken canopy put forth all her arts of captivating to win the suspicious king. He dissembled, receiving her advances as the familiarities of friendship, and the common freedoms of her manner. It was contrary to his wish to be alone with her; but she had induced him to retire, on the excuse of discussing some matter of mutual importance. When she found him proof against all the temptation she was mistress of, pique succeeded other feelings, and led her to try his temper.

"I had heard much of the surpassing beauty of your wife, but it seems that she has been unable to retain your love. What have you done with Doris? Where is the damsel you conveyed to Strato's Tower after the triumvir had left it?"

He was embarrassed, but rejoined—

"Ah, Cleopatra, you may smile, but I deserve a better return for leading Antony to Strato's Tower, than the loss of my rich territory round Jericho."

The amorous queen archly replied—

"I would console you for the loss, and heal your heart with the balm of love, in payment for the balsam of your fields."

"Ah, illustrious queen, you have an inexhaustible treasure wherewith to liquidate the debts you owe to many a sighing king; but I desire a more substantial payment than fleeting love."

"I would not, Herod, be unjust, and so will send you a few crocodiles to stock the Jordan, and some camels to traverse this level country."

"Nor would I be so cruel as to separate the former from their congenial country-woman, the glories of the realm: your mutual tears at parting would make the Nile

overflow its banks. Send the camels, laden with love-epistles, to Antony, or to some poor Syrian; they will fan the flame of the one, and be balm to the wounded heart of the other."

Cleopatra bit her lip and blushed at these rough replies, and yet continued—

"I made you a generous offer, for which I expected no return, since neither the kind Doris, the beauteous Mariamne, nor the damsel at Strato's Tower, could retain your heart for a few short months. You have been lately made a king, and so rightly follow the bright example of the wisest prince that ever filled the throne of Israel. He married an Egyptian princess; indeed the learned rabbis say that his drama was written to celebrate her beauty."

"I am no poet; but when as great a cause shall excite me, perchance I may turn poet too."

"Methinks, Herod, 'twould be an eagle's note."

"Hold, queen! we should not sing in concert; your voice would be far too high for me, your flights too rapid. I must sing under another standard."

"What, desert your allegiance, Herod?"

"To Antony? yes, when you renounce him, but not till then."

"When I renounce that noble ruler of the world, I will seek protection from the valiant Herod."

"You must pay him, then, for protection, with his balsam-gardens; that, queen, shall be the first article of our treaty."

"Nay, you avaricious man! love first; afterwards, if you require it, I will pay you."

"What with?" asked the king, somewhat more annoyed with her perseverance.

"With love and sweet words."

"Ah, Cleopatra, such payment may do for the noble-minded Antony, but I should prefer my balsam-gardens."

"We will not quarrel about these fields; you shall have your balsam-gardens again for a trifling annual tribute. What will you give me?"

"I accept your offer, and will pay you double the tribute you require."

"Well, what will you give me?"

"I will of course pay you in your own current coin—love and sweet words."

"Fie, you prodigal! I will obtain Mariamne's consent before I sign the treaty. If she agrees, and Doris accords with her, and you can insure the favourable countenance of the damsel in Strato's Tower, we will sign the treaty."

"The assent of the lady of the Tower I have; for you know that Cleopatra only has been there."

She interrupted him, and added—

"I think the matter may be considered as settled; for I see that Mariamne would not care about her consent; and as to Doris, she always did as she was ordered."

Herod quickly answered—

"Our bargain, as you say, is complete; so you have only to transfer the gardens, and I will directly pay you as much of the tribute as can be justly desired."

Cleopatra feigned surprise, and smiling replied—

"I entirely forgot. It will be necessary to obtain Antony's consent. Shall I use my influence with him? He will not be angry with you. Why look so serious? Think you that he will?"

"Queen, you exact too much; in truth, you deal hardly with me. Shall we descend and visit the theatre, or command the musicians and dancers to attend?"

"You may go to Strato's Tower, if you please; I shall go to Mariamne, and tell her the offer you have made me for the balsam-gardens."

They descended together. Salome joined them in the

spacious court, and was immediately led by Cleopatra towards the armon. On the way, she told Salome the substance of her intended communication, who instantly perceived the pain she would inflict, and gladly conducted her to the apartment of the queen, jocularly exciting her to pursue her purpose. She declined entering the apartment herself; but, after introducing the queen, did obeisance, and retired.

Mariamne partially raised herself from the cushions on which she was reclining, but gave no welcome to her visitor. This reception abashed not the intruder, who came with the intention of revenging what she considered the insults she had received. She sunk with a careless air on a cushioned couch near Mariamne, and thus began —

"It grieves me to see that the roses of health have left your cheek. Alas, you are as worn and wan as one who had traversed the burning desert, or perchance one who had pined from hopeless love. I came to tell you, that I have been discussing a matter of some import with your husband, beneath the tent, on the summit of the palace."

Mariamne made no reply; the blood began to flush her cheek, but she restrained her indignant feelings, and changed them to contempt, which was, against her inclination, somewhat expressed by her mouth. Cleopatra observed it, but knew too well the symptoms of a wounded heart, not to be certain that she could pour, by her pretended jocularity, some burning drops on it, which would add to her anguish. Dermah stood behind Mariamne, and was calmly scrutinising the Egyptian's countenance, who thus continued —

"Herod is more than angry at Antony's compelling me to take the balsam-gardens at Jericho, so I have offered to let him have them for an annual tribute. What do you think it is?"

Mariamne calmly replied —

" Queen of Egypt, it must be more than you have any right to receive, since the territory is neither yours nor Antony's to give. Even the triumvir cannot bestow what he has unjustly taken by force of arms."

" Since you are both so hurt at losing these few fields, if Antony will permit me, I will gladly return them. The tribute offered me I never will receive without your consent—I directly told your husband so."

Then, affecting jocularity, she laughingly added —

" Doris too must give her approbation. Now can you believe that he offered to pay me a tribute in sweet words and love ?"

Mariamne coldly, and with some dignity, replied —

" No, I do not believe it; and have good reasons for my incredulity."

" Your people are celebrated for their incredulity, so I could expect no more from you. But I assure you his offer went still farther; he proposed double the tribute: but you know that I cannot in honour accept it, without the consent of his wives; and I have added the approbation of the damsel of Strato's Tower."

At these last words, Mariamne's eyes were fixed upon the queen; her cheek was crimsoned, and she became greatly agitated. Cleopatra feigned concern, and approaching her said, in a tone of affected tenderness —

" Alas, I have struck too tender a chord; but forgive me,—it is only an idle tale I heard. Why are you so deeply agitated ? The Tower is a mere ruin now. Were you ever there ?"

Mariamne looked at her as if she would read her inmost thoughts, then proudly answered —

" No; but I suspect my name has been foully used, and some vile substitute placed there instead of me. Do

you know who that was, and for what purpose? It must have been a shameless one, or it would not need so much secrecy."

Cleopatra laughed, as she replied —

"You have not much reason to be distressed. We Egyptians know more of the strategy of love than you. Will you consent to the payment of Herod's tribute?"

Mariamne rose from her couch, and glancing a look of indignation and contempt on the abandoned queen, left the apartment, followed by Dermah.

Cleopatra rejoined Salome, and though mortified at Mariamne's conduct, merely remarked, that the pride of the Asmoneans had not been over-rated. On the following day, no one was permitted to enter the royal armon, at which Herod was pleased, because he considered the refusal as arising from mortification on the part of Mariamne, and therefore made no request for admission.

Banquets, trials of military skill, public spectacles, and games, were celebrated in honour of the royal visitor. Herod seized the opportunity of securing the suffrages of the soldiers and the mass of the population, by his prodigality and apparent kindness. The illness of Mariamne was felt by the people, notwithstanding the great attempts that were made to occupy their attention. The king perceived it, and suffered some uneasiness at any one being held in as great consideration as himself.

On the evening of the third day, Cleopatra left Jerusalem, accompanied by Herod and a numerous escort. Besides the cavalry were many beasts of burden, with tents, and every luxury the country could afford. When the night closed in, the leading bands lighted their vessels of pitch and flax, and bore them aloft on long poles. The bands of musicians whiled away the tedious hours of the march by songs and the sounds of numerous instruments.

On the signal for resting being made, sentinels spread themselves along the open plain; hundreds of attendants unloaded the animals and raised the royal tents, while others more immediately about the person of the queen were ready to spread the costly carpets, prepare the bath, sprinkle the liquid odours, light the incense, and put in order the refreshing viands; so that when the royal cavalcade reached the spot, every thing was found, that luxury could devise, to refresh them after their weary march. Having reached Beer-ramoth, the king escorted his guest across the river, and bade her farewell on the confines of her country. He waited until the last of her retinue could no longer be distinguished from a lofty eminence, then hastened back to Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XXI.

Although Mariamne never supposed that her husband's affections had been won by Cleopatra, she was indignant at his attempt to distress her by his marked attentions, and was angry at being made subject to the insults of this abandoned woman. The conduct of her husband towards her had blighted all her hopes, and his increasing suspicion of every person of worth and influence, and the numerous sudden executions and confiscations, filled her mind with terrible apprehensions. During his temporary absence from the capital, she prepared herself for the interview that must take place on his return.

Dermah, by her conversation and firmness of nature, excited her to greater exertion, both of mind and body; while her affection for her children made her determined to exasperate, as little as possible, the fierce and mistrustful monarch. She could not help believing that he still loved her; but she saw too clearly, that the possession of power, the want of principle and dependence on Providence, had broken down the few restraints which had existed over his mind, and that he was rushing onward in a gradually increasing career of cruelty and sin. Her sense of duty prompted her to wish to win him back to the paths of peace, while her judgment told her that the attempt would be fruitless.

The aged Cypros was more than usual in her armon, and was evidently concerned at the alteration in her person and manner, and often tried to cheer her with promises of happiness to come; she even severely censured her son,

spoke with feelings of resentment against Cleopatra, and condemned the unjust hostility of Salome, which was now publicly commented on. It seemed as if habitual piety, and a deep conviction of the emptiness of all human possessions, had produced a state of mind that rendered her perceptions of right and wrong instinctively certain and quick, accompanied with a fearless resolution of acting as these dictates directed her. Dermah soon discerned that her actions were sincere, and the genuine results of that mental state, which, on the approach of death, are sometimes possessed, and then used her conviction as a means to soothe and even influence the queen. Hyrcanus and Cypros met oftener than before, and conversed with painful composure on their approaching dissolution, since both were far advanced in years.

Salome, not having access to the queen, had thought it prudent to retire from Jerusalem, and wait the event of the approaching interview between Herod and Mariamne. Alexandra was still under the partial control of a confidential officer of Herod's, and added much to the unhappiness of her daughter by her ceaseless complaints, and indiscreet abuse of the king. She had addressed Cleopatra during her visit; but they were all ignorant of the purport and result of the application. Babarrah had been sedulously separated from his wife, and thus prevented from guiding them by his counsel, and checking the king by his presence; for Herod could not help being restrained by the wisdom, virtue, and courage of such a man: his presence, it is true, was daily more irksome to him, since no man can endure to live under the scrutiny of continual disapprobation when conscious of deserving it, yet too weak to profit by the lesson, and not yet hardened enough to remove the individual by violent means.

About this time the affairs of the Roman world had

reached an acme of confusion, that made it evident Cæsar and Antony would contend for the dominion. Herod was preparing to assist the latter, who, falsely confiding in his strength, directed him to wage war with the king of Arabia. Before he set off on this expedition, he returned to Jerusalem.

Mariamne made no preparations for his reception, but remained shut up in her private rooms. His love for her was still a pervading feeling; and though he had lately conducted himself in a manner not calculated to inspire that opinion, he was anxious to restore harmony between himself and his queen. After traversing the court, and receiving the congratulations of the officers of state and courtiers, he passed on to the armon, mortified at the queen not being there. Attendants warned her of his approach; she appeared not to heed it, but continued instructing her eldest child in some portion of the law. She was yet pale, and a settled calmness overspread her brow. He opened the folding curtains, and with conciliatory feelings quickly advanced to embrace her. She arose, and received his embrace without warmth and without return, while a tear filled her eye, that hung awhile among the long lashes, then fell upon his hand which held hers. He was agitated, and, with some emotion, said—

"My beloved Mariamne, why receive your husband thus? Alas! there are cares enough in life, without unnecessarily adding to them."

She raised her eyes—the deep melancholy expressed by them was not lightened by the most transient feeling of pleasure at his words—and gently replied—

"I, a suspected wife, after being exposed to the insults of a murderess and a shameless woman, and made a scorn of my people by your conduct towards me, could receive you in no other way. The cares of life are either, for the

most part, our own producing, or have their origin in the effects of others' errors — my woes spring from both these sources, the greater number from your proceedings."

Her look, the manner in which she said these words, and the temporary feelings of contrition that crossed his mind, revived his love, and he would have pressed her to his bosom, but she withdrew, saying—

"I was not born to play the hypocrite; before I can receive your kindness, I must not only be assured of your perfect confidence, and be restored to my honours with becoming respect, but screened from any farther attacks of my enemies. It is not my nature to endure insult at one time, and affection at another, according to your caprice: I am not to be made the object of foul and cruel suspicion to-day, and the cause of your shedding an uncle's innocent blood, and on the morrow the object of your earthly love. I prefer death to such degradation. O, how opposite are such insults, such deeds, to all you professed and promised me, when, as an inexperienced woman, I listened to your addresses!"

Towards the conclusion of this speech her words were in a more animated tone, but her expression was still unaltered. Herod was disturbed, and love was contending with his native violence, while an earnest desire to regain, on any terms, her forgiveness, quickly found a place in his mind, and called into action his dissimulation. After some hesitation, he said, in a conciliating manner—

"Instead of thus harshly condemning me, you should, my much-loved Mariamne, have drawn a veil before those errors, which arose from my surpassing love for you; I have erred, but again I say that error was caused by an over-mastering passion for you."

In the same tone, and with a similar calmness, she answered—

"True affection has no such effects; the first proof of its existence is confidence; the next, preferring the beloved object to ourself; the last proofs are, tenderness, forbearance, and respect. When I see these effects in you, then I shall suppose you love me; but until then, I shall still conclude that you love yourself, while you falsely suppose that you have this true affection for me."

She ceased; and he thus answered—

"Nature has bestowed on you a cooler temperament than on me; you judge of these effects from yourself: exert for a time your understanding, and you will discern that in me love would be evinced by such uncontrolled actions as I have committed, and for which I seek forgiveness."

Mariamne was agitated, for she could not hear unmoved a husband own his error and ask forgiveness: her natural tenderness and pride were contending; he should not have given her reason time to act, and perhaps all would have been well; but he waited gazing on her: she suddenly assumed for a moment a more animated look, and rejoined—

"Were your feelings uncontrolled, or uncontrollable? If the former, you made the object of your affection that of your ungoverned rage and despicable resentment; if you plead the latter, I at once refuse to become the victim of insanity. Herod, did your uncontrolled feelings lead you to suspect me, upbraid me, and stamp in indelible characters a scene of blood upon my memory? Did your uncontrollable feelings induce you to listen to calumny, confine and insult an Asmonean princess who was once your benefactor; degrade your wife by bringing her for an associate a woman polluted with crime—a foul wretch reeking with a murdered brother's blood — one whose ambition burst the tenderest ties of nature, and led her, from motives of policy, to induce her paramour to order her young and unoffending sister

to be poisoned? Did these uncontrollable feelings make you try to subdue Mariamne's spirit by dallying with such a mass of depravity? If you thought so, you were indeed mistaken, and know nothing of my nature. I felt pity for you as my husband; I was mortified that he should act so. As a man and a monarch, I looked on your mean proceedings with abhorrence and contempt. Ah, I see your eyes are flashing with rage, and your cheeks are becoming suffused with blood. Control or not this rising wrath, poor Mariamne cannot now be much affected with it, if it bursts on her, nor flattered, if justice and reason for once get the mastery over you."

She looked on him intently for some seconds, then exclaimed —

"Herod, O Herod, you are rushing headlong to perdition; crime, misery, and the gulf of damnation, are wide spread before you! O, seek the forgiveness of your blood-stained crimes from our heavenly Father; look to him for assistance and support!"

Then, in a voice of tenderness and supplication, she added —

"Come, kneel with me, and I will pray for you, with you, and we will again be happy, at least while I stay. Do those words startle you? I say so, because last night, when deep sleep was on me, the radiant spirit of my brother beckoned me to Paradise; his noble mien partook of angelic grace; his beauteous brow beamed with celestial dignity; he called me away, and Zillah stood afar and opened her arms, as if to court my embrace. I long to flee away and be at rest with them. Come, Herod, kneel with me; their good spirits and our ministering angels will inspire us with holy thoughts. Ah, why do you look so pale? Why do you tremble so? What makes the perspiration thus trickle from your brow? Herod, Herod —"

He took her hand as he said, with faltering voice—

"I—I cannot bear to hear you; there was something prophetic in the sound of your words. I cannot hear you talk of death; I mean of your dying. I—I will not—"

He burst into an immoderate flood of tears, and fell upon her neck. Mariamne was surprised, and wept with and consoled him; then lifted her child, who cried because he saw his parents weep, and presented him to his father, round whose neck he threw his little arms, and cried from natural sympathy, he knew not why. Herod was overcome; and for a short period all the fast-waning better feelings of his nature seemed revived. Mariamne saw it, gently sent her child away, and opening her arms, affectionately embraced her husband, ignorant of the true cause of his dreadful agitation; and again, with irresistible softness, tried to win him back to the paths of righteousness and peace. She prayed, and listened to hear her words repeated from his lips. He trembled, the words faltered on his tongue, and he sunk down in an agony of grief, and wept aloud. She permitted the violence of his grief to be exhausted before she spoke; but during this time her soul was in fervent prayer for him. It was some time before he recovered even a partial state of composure, when he tenderly embraced her, and went to his own cabinet, as if to commune with himself.

Her abhorrence of the crimes of Cleopatra, and her accidental reference to her murdered brother, had roused the slumbering vengeance of his conscience, attended with the sudden terror of detection by the only being he really loved; his superstitious feelings had been also awakened at the same time by the incidental mentioning of her dream; and for a time remorse, anguish, and almost despair, assailed him. He cast himself on the ground, wept, beat his bosom, and recalled every minute circumstance attending the deaths

of Aristobulus and Zillah, and upbraided himself with every term of reproach. In the paroxysm of his repentance he was on the point of denouncing himself and demanding death: the shame of exposure alone prevented him. When the force of his feelings was somewhat exhausted, the suspicion of detection flashed across his mind, and some infernal spirit prompted the idea of removing the possibility of discovery. That thought he shuddered at and rejected; and some tears forced their way from his eyes at feeling himself sunk so low as to have, for an instant, allowed the cursed thought to occupy his mind. It was night before he was restored to his usual state; he sought Mariamne, humbled himself, asked her forgiveness, and obtained it, with the declaration, that "as confidence was slow of growth, she should not feel dependence until his actions were according to the laws of their holy faith." Their children were brought, and Mariamne dared to think for a moment that there might yet be days of happiness in store for her. Cypros joined them, and by her simplicity and piety, shewed how sincerely she rejoiced in their reconciliation. On the next day Herod ordered a splendid banquet, and invited Hyrcanus, Alexandra, and his own family, and many nobles. The most precious offerings were brought with his own hand to his queen, and the most distinguished marks of honour shewn her: he even publicly declared her from the throne the regent of the kingdom during his absence to carry on the Arabian war.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Arabians, aware of Herod's intention to wage war on them, had advanced to Lod with a considerable army. Near that place he engaged and routed them, and they retreated to Kanah, where another army was soon collected. The king tried to follow up the advantages he had gained, and led on his men flushed with victory. The enemy was discomfited and giving way, when Athenio, Cleopatra's general and an ally, by her orders traitorously attacked a flank of Herod's army, which so dismayed them, and gave such fresh courage to the Arabians, that they were routed and dispersed with great slaughter. Herod collected all he could find of the remainder; and being aware that the Arabians had mustered all their forces, marched immediately towards the frontiers of their country, to compel the victorious army to relinquish their intention of marching against Jerusalem, and make them return to their own territory to defend it against his predatory attacks.

He had not long been encamped among the mountains before his army was so considerably increased, that he determined, by a circuitous march, to surprise their capital, and seize on the treasure he might find in his route. To effect this end, he marched towards the confines of the desert, provided with every necessary which could facilitate his enterprise. It was absolutely necessary to ascertain the state of the enemy's country before he proceeded; therefore he ordered his army to encamp in a wood of oaks, palms, and sycamores, near the foot of a mountain, whence gushed a cool refreshing spring, while spies and scouts were des-

patched to obtain the required information. His advanced bodies were on the very edge of the desert, lest the wandering tribes should rush down on him unwares. Many days had elapsed, and neither the spies nor scouts returned. Herod became anxious, and despatched others in search of them, some of whom in two or three days came in without any intelligence of their companions. The men were becoming insubordinate, mistrustful, and discontented, for they had a secret dread of the desert. The king perceiving this, and hearing the same from his officers, determined on marching along the edge of it, and entering the country of the enemy in the rear of their army, while another numerous division should keep them employed on the Judæan side. This plan being arranged, they moved forward, and soon reached a region of sand and stones, intersected with mountains of every size and form, all dry and sterile—a few burnt-up thorns and crumbling plants were all this horrid place afforded; and a dread and dreary silence reigned around.

Herod had not received the account of the army near Samaria having advanced; until that information reached him, he could not proceed. He cheered his men, held out to them the highest hopes of reward and plunder, and praised and promoted all those who were sanguine and obedient.

While encamped near a spring, waiting for the arrival of messengers, or the return of the scouts, a distant and wide-spread whirring sound was heard, soon followed by a gloom like the awful light of an eclipse: this sound became like "the noise of chariots on the mountain-tops," and the gloom increased: the fearful sounds continued with deeper darkness, until they became like rushing flames of fire devouring the stubble; the soldiers were all downcast, they were pained at heart, and their faces "gathered blackness;" for they knew that this cloud of locusts was stronger than

a mighty army in battle-array, and would leave their fields a desolate wilderness. They watched the direction of their flight, as the noise decreased and the light returned, but no man among them smiled.

Toward evening the heat became intense, and the stillness of the atmosphere silenced every tongue; the animals looked towards the desert, raised their nostrils, and became restless. In the west was seen, through a wide opening between some lofty ground, a boundless extent of arid sand; close above the horizon was a thick veil of dark and sullen clouds; every eye was turned to watch the descending sun; in an instant the clouds were rent into a thousand unequal long and narrow lines, and a disk of unusual magnitude was displayed: the distant clouds were gilded with deep-toned light, while separated numbers of diverging rays of the most brilliant hues rose on high, and vanished at the zenith of the heavens. The mingled tints spread along the ground, and illumined the army, variously arrayed either in armour, or in dresses of their country calculated for defence.

As soon as darkness veiled the heavens, there appeared the similitudes of fires on the edge of the horizon, and the men hastened to marshal themselves in battle-array, believing that their enemies had taken a wider circuit and entoiled them. Their fears were soon dissipated, for it was only the stars seen through the misty exhalations floating near the earth—when they rose above them, they shone forth in all their splendour. During the night transparent fleecy vapours of bright and snowy whiteness suddenly sprung from the earth to an immeasurable height, and dispersed. Few of the army slept until the morning dawned. Herod consulted the most experienced men among them, who all agreed that such appearances were forerunners of some dreadful convulsion. They were not mistaken; for the sun

rose veiled in mist, the air was suffocating and hot; gusts of wind were sometimes felt, but oftener heard in the air high above them. Before mid-day the sun had become of a lurid colour, and blazed with intenser heat, and a fearful silence pervaded the desert and the army. The heavens towards the south became imbued with a flame-coloured hue, terminating in a violet tint. No sooner was this terrible sign perceived, than orders were given to fly towards the mountains. Before that order could be obeyed by the willing, yet affrighted men, the simoom passed not far from them, blighting with death all that lay within its track. Before it came, the horses, camels, and other beasts, raised lamentable cries, fell on their knees, and buried their nostrils in the sand. Even those in full career proved unmanageable, and did the same, and were imitated by their masters.

Herod saw the dismay of his soldiers, and felt his impotence when the messenger of destruction swept along; his sins all flashed into his mind, and he was smitten with fear, and recalled the destruction of the Assyrian host, whom the messenger of the Lord had thus destroyed.

As soon as this dry fiery blast had gone by, the men hastened to the neighbouring mountains, and from thence peered out fearfully upon the desert. A keen hissing noise reached them, and shadowy forms rose from the horizon and mingled with the skies; soon after, dust and powder fell upon them, and the animals again shewed signs of fear and restless anxiety. The horizon seemed moving, then thousands of spiring columns rose into the skies, and came wheeling furiously onward, whizzing and hissing; they vanished on reaching the base of the hills, and a noise was heard like spent surges rushing up a stony shore. More columns succeeded them, each nearer than the last, till one that towered into the heavens came whirling on, making level the mountains of sand as it passed, and min-

gling their particles with its spires, and burst so near the army, that one wail arose, and all for a season believed themselves buried beneath the burning sand. Stillness more terror-striking than a tempest followed; the men were recovering, and thinking that the worst was over, when they were cast down, and the earth undulated and shook; the springs contiguous were seen to gush out, then retire; the brooks rose above their banks, and as quickly disappeared, and vast crevices opened, as if eager to devour them. Horror and amazement seized the host, and they thought that the wrath of heaven was poured out on their land. Some screamed, some muttered prayers, while others confessed their sins and called upon God. They knew not where to go, for subterranean thunder, and the general appearance of the country, too truly told that they were not the only sufferers. The night was spent in terror; in the morning an armed man was seen on a distant hill riding towards them; he was brought to Herod, and told him of the dreadful ruin of cities and men, and that Antony had been reported to be at Actium. By the time he had marched his army to Jerusalem, messengers met him with the intelligence that, on the day of the dreadful earthquake, Antony had been beaten in that fatal battle.

Although this information made Herod tremble for his kingdom, and desirous of making his peace with Cæsar, he was compelled to recruit and increase his army, and again attack the enemy. After various encounters, he at length drove them within their entrenchments; and after displaying his military skill and valour, compelled some to surrender; while the remainder, who preferred death to slavery, emaciated with thirst, rushed out and fell by the sword. This last defeat left them no alternative, and he was chosen ruler of their nation. The day these momentous affairs were settled, he proceeded with haste to Jerusalem.

Mariamne received him with kindness, but settled sorrow still sat on her brow, and all that he could say was unable to remove it.

Herod and his adherents were apprehensive that Cæsar would avenge his friendship for Antony by depriving him of the kingdom. All his suspicions of others were increased from the fear that he might be deprived of his power, wealth, and the means of gratifying his unbounded ambition. The remorse and feelings which had followed his interview with Mariamne, previous to his leaving her for the Arabian war, were effaced; the appalling scene in the desert, and the effects on him, had been nearly obliterated by his recent victories and prosperity. The dread of being driven from his throne, and deprived of what he held most dear, completely erased the last sad remnants of his better nature. He reflected on his present condition, and on all the human means within his reach to prevent the catastrophe he expected. The first thought that ensued was, who should succeed him? Hyrcanus alone was left of all the Asmonean line. There was but one mode of banishing all apprehension from this unsubstantial phantom of his fear; and he resolved, in the dark recesses of a mind capable of such decisions, to act up to the last maxim of human policy, and destroy him. He masked his dire intention beneath the appearance of unusual kindness; his general manner was more conciliating to all about him, while his conduct and conversation to Mariamne began to inspire her with hope; and she felt the first germs of delusive expectations, only to have them blighted for ever.

Babarrah, whom Herod had employed in negotiations and other state-affairs, was again in Jerusalem; and, as if endowed with more than human penetration, suspected the king's intention, and boldly recommended Hyrcanus to return at once to Babylon, and thus attempt to remove all

suspicion of his views. Dermah even urged this step with the queen, on the grounds that, in case Herod proceeded to Rhodes, the people, yet attached to him, might demand him as their ruler. Mariamne attended to this specious reasoning, and privately advised Hyrcanus and Alexandra to retire for a time to that city. The former rejected her advice, as emanating from ideal fears; the latter had, during her retirement, amassed a considerable sum, and was so desirous of spending it at Rome, that she proposed to alter their destination, and proceed thither directly. It was in vain combating her inclinations, for she mistook them for the soundest reasoning. Dermah, who was present, forgot for the moment her usual respect and caution, and remarked—

"To go to Rome at this time would excite jealousy and suspicion in——"

She stopped herself: Mariamne regarded her, and blushed deeply, but made no remark; for it was evident that her unfinished speech had conveyed her thoughts. After this meeting, the queen deemed it prudent to say no more to Alexandra; in private she affectionately tried to persuade Hyrcanus to accede to her wishes: she even proposed that her little son and Dermah should accompany him; but all her entreaties proved useless. The old man desired, above all human things, to look on the Temple on Mount Moriah, and die at Jerusalem.

During the time the monarch was lulling suspicion by his urbanity, he was devising the surest means of sacrificing his friend and the grandsire of Mariamne. When his plot was ripe for execution, he summoned the chiefs and Hyrcanus to a banquet. Harp, psaltery, and clarion sounded their joyful notes, the goblets were crowned with wine, and the honoured guests, in splendid raiment, reclined at the sumptuous banquet, where their king presided, and all was

revelry and joy. A tired and dusty courier entered the court, and, prostrating himself before the monarch, held towards him a packet of sealed letters; Herod took them, and the messenger retired. This happened so quickly and tacitly, that but few of the guests observed it. He unrolled the letters, bit his lip, frowned, and more than once glanced his fierce look on the innocent Hyrcanus. He then appeared to relapse into gloomy thought, and, as it were, unconsciously put the letters in his bosom. The sparkling wine was quaffed, fresh viands brought, questions propounded, and dark sayings proposed. Whilst the greater number of the guests were thus occupied, Herod addressed Hyrcanus in the following manner—

"Have you heard lately from your friend Malchus?"

The unsuspecting man replied—

"Once of late he wrote to me letters of congratulation on your great successes, and of salutation to me."

The monarch smiled, though his cheek for a moment lost its colour, and he raised the goblet with a less steady hand; he next inquired—

"Has Malchus sent you any presents in remembrance of your ancient friendship?"

With equal openness, Hyrcanus answered—

"He sent me not long ago four well-conditioned steeds; but time has stiffened my old limbs, and unnerved my hand, so I have not used them much."

Herod's lips grew livid and quivered, his eyes scowled with uncertain and unfixed looks on the kind old man. He rose hastily from his couch, and exclaimed in a loud and hollow voice, which hushed the guests to instant silence, and filled them with amazement—

"Thou time-worn hypocrite! thou foul stain on our friendship! thou base blot of the Asmonean line! thou art an accursed traitor! Friends, courtiers, captains! listen,

but let your indignation keep within due bounds, since we know your zeal. This grey-haired conspirator against my life and throne has owned that he has held correspondence with Malchus. He says, O foul hypocrite! that these letters were of congratulation on the conquests of our men of valour, and of salutation to himself; and that his presents were of ambling horses for his pleasure. Our faithful emissaries have intercepted these congratulatory epistles, and learnt the uses of these steeds. Here are his letters to the governor Malchus, asking for an asylum and an escort, that he may take means to obtain the kingdom of Judæa! This loyal governor not only promises him the means, but is already raising forces to dethrone me, and devastate Israel. Ministers of affairs, take these letters, and endeavour to discover what other miscreants are concerned in this treasonable plot."

Hyrcanus, calm and collected, now attempted to speak, and began by declaring the letters to be forgeries. Herod, with an agitated voice and furious look, vociferated —

"Silence! nor let your tongue utter lies when on the eve of accounting for such vile treachery and intended murder. Guards, bear him away to instant death! Away with him, and let no man pity him!"

The guards seized him. The king refused to hear him, but strode away, loudly calling for his officers to depart with him directly to Rhodes, lest the effects of this foul deed should influence Cæsar, and be injurious to the realm.

Before the death of Hyrcanus was known even in the palace, Herod had quitted the city, having previously left his brother Pheroras with the chief direction of the affairs of the kingdom, and given orders to Sohemus and his treasurer respecting the queen and the remainder of his family.

The queen, passing from an inner court, heard and saw a stir and whispering among her domestics, with looks of sorrow and surprise; she wondered what had occurred, and had hardly reached her armon, when Dermah, with dishevelled hair, and grief and anger declared by her look and voice, rushed in, and cried —

"Woe worth the day! O daughter of Israel, gird thee with sackcloth;
Mourn, mourn with bitter lamentation!
Woe worth the day! for the spoiler hath passed by;
Mourn for innocent blood — the blood of the aged hath been basely shed!"

Mariamne clasped her hands in anguish, her lips became pale, and her sight dim, as she exclaimed —

"Woe is me now! for my soul is wearied because of murderers."

She sunk senseless on the pavement. Dermah hastened for assistance. Her little children, who were near, hearing the lamentation, ran in, and seeing their mother on the ground, raised their cries of grief, and clinging round her, could scarcely be taken away. Many hours elapsed before Mariamne recovered her consciousness: at first she wildly gazed on those standing or kneeling near; observing their garments rent, and every sign of grief, she hastily half raised herself and gazed upon them, as she drew her trembling hand across her brow. Unconnected thoughts came wandering into her mind, and hollow sounds of woe involuntarily issued from her lips. She gazed on them still more intensely, and paused: the dreadful fact flashed upon her memory — she shrieked out "*Murder!*" and again fell senseless. For many more hours no signs of consciousness could be discovered — scarce those of life; at length mutterings came from her cold, pale lips; she shivered, and some

tears gushed from her closed eyelids. The inhabitants of the palace were in great consternation, and the people evinced their grief for Hyrcanus, and their concern for their beloved queen, and began to assemble about the courts: the fierce Pheroras ordered them to be dispersed, which only excited them still more.

Dermah had summoned the physician of the queen, but he was not to be found: she saw Mazrah among the crowd, and immediately introduced him into the palace. The noise and confusion had attracted Salome, who seeing the Essene led by Dermah into the armon, noted it on the tablets of her memory.

Mazrah knew that Mariamne was suffering from sorrow of heart, and seeing her extended on the couch, shivering, and at times convulsed, feared lest the effects of this violent shock might be productive of dreadful consequences. He attempted by the aid of pungent odours to rouse her, and succeeded so far as to awaken her; she sat up, but yet remained mute, with her eyes fixed. He endeavoured by words of the tenderest sympathy to excite her tears, but she paid no attention. Dermah, by his direction, summoned the mourners; they came, and tried first to call her attention by the distant sounds of low and melancholy music, while in a voice of sorrow some sung —

"Call for the mourning women;
Send for the skilful in songs of sorrow;
Let them hasten and take up a wailing for us."

Her eyes turned towards the sounds, but a vacant look still overspread her brow. The female mourners in tones of woe followed the example of Dermah, and sung —

"Behold the tears of the oppressed;
Have they no comforter?"

Others thus responded to the sounds of distant music —

" On the side of their oppressors is power,
So they have no comforter.
Come, hasten then and wail with us,
For by sorrow the spirit is broken;
That our eyes may run down with tears,
And our eyelids gush out with waters:
For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion,
Loud lamentations for the slain of the daughter of my people."

At these last words, Mariamne beat the time with her wan fingers, and her bewildered thoughts were returning; yet no tear flowed from her eyes, and she seemed unconscious that any one was with her: presently, in a voice of the deepest and most touching melancholy, according with the notes of woe, she repeated—

" O, that I had in the wilderness a place of rest —
Of refuge from the men of treachery and blood!"

At the sound of her voice, the little children, whom Mazrah had ordered to be brought near her, clung round her and cried: their grief attracted her attention; she looked on them and said—

" Weep not, my babes; weep not for me."

She pressed them with convulsive sobs to her bosom, which heaved as if too full for utterance; at length in agony she exclaimed, as she put them away —

" Blessings on him who taketh them,
Who dasheth my little ones against the stones!"

Floods of tears followed, and all present mingled their grief with hers; even the Essene, whose feelings were supposed to be subdued, wept without the power of restraining himself.

Having recalled her to her recollection, he sent the mourners away, and allowed her violent grief to exhaust her, then said—

" Mariamne, give ear unto the voice of thy friend:
Behold, the hand of the Lord is not shortened, that it cannot save,
Neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.
The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away;
Let us bless the name of the Lord."

She looked at him and replied—

" The hand of the Lord hath touched me,
And I am consumed with sorrow:
O, that I had wings, I would fly away;
Even on the wings of death would I seek rest unto my soul" ——

Then added—

" Mazrah, the paths of peace are the paths of wisdom: simplicity and humility are the raiments of happiness: frugality and labour are the handmaids of health: the light estimation of worldly things leaves room for the contemplation of heavenly ones, and brings that peace which neither riches, nor power, nor glory can produce."

She looked round, as if to see who was present, and perceiving only Dermah, said, in an imploring, emphatic voice —

" Mazrah, such is the tenour of your life: take my babes to your silent haunts, and teach them to trample beneath their feet the vanities of the world, and look with pity and scorn on the serab,* glory; on those messengers of punishment, conquerors; and on those snares to every dire and accursed evil, conquest and wealth: teach them to despise and subdue the vile inclinations of mortality, and to hold converse with the immortal and better part. Could I insure this for my poor babes, I should with joy of soul be gathered unto my fathers."

She wept again over her children. Mazrah consoled her and withdrew.

* Mirage.

Although the strictest directions had been given by the king to detain Alexandra as a prisoner, she effected her escape the day after she heard of the murder of Hyrcanus, and sought the protection of her daughter, to whose misery she greatly added by her unavailing regrets, and by continually venting her own apprehensions: her unguarded violence began to produce so great an effect on the inmates of the palace, that Pheroras ordered her to be conducted to her former abode.

After the expiration of three days, Mariamne, having recovered the effects of the first shock her feelings had sustained, was informed by Sohemus that Herod had commanded him to conduct her to a fortress near Antioch,* while Cypros and Salome were to sojourn at Massada.

Mariamne received this information without emotion; for though she considered herself as a captive, she was glad, at any sacrifice, to be so far removed from Salome, and equally happy at leaving Jerusalem, where every object excited some harrowing recollection.

She no longer suffered the poignancy of grief, for that was deadened by the approaching calmness of despair: it was impossible for her to be any more deceived by the delusions of hope, or prevented from exercising her judgment by the promises and temporary repentance of her husband. She now saw him in his true character of a fierce, yet fearful tyrant, gradually becoming more suspicious of worth and ability, even among the poor, and ready to sacrifice all around him, from the mere apprehension of their being made obstacles to his retaining the rank and power of a king. The few kind and noble feelings of his nature, having no aid from the exercise of piety, had waned away; the temporary remorse, and the fair promises he had made to

* Of Alexandria, now Scanderona.

her, were like the flickering flashes of an expiring lamp, strong but momentary, and the apparently last natural efforts to obtain support from an exhausted source.

He had commanded her and Alexandra to be conveyed to so distant a fortress, lest their presence, and the effect of the death of Hyrcanus, should excite the people to revolt, and induce them to accuse him to Cæsar, and request him to restore the throne to the Asmonean dynasty. He separated them from his own race, because their dissensions were injurious to him.

Mariamne attired herself, and summoned Pheroras to her presence. On his first entering the apartment where she sat on a chair of state, he appeared disinclined to pay her obeisance, on which she with dignity rebuked him, and ordered him either to quit her presence, or perform the accustomed homage. The proud savage was reluctantly compelled to obey, and remain in an humble attitude, listening to her as she thus addressed him—

"The friends of my departed grandsire have embalmed his body; I am going to a fortress beyond Antioch, under the escort of Sohemus, and my mother under the more immediate protection of our treasurer: it is my determination to convey his body to Modin, the burial-place of the illustrious Maccabees. Here is a list of those who are to accompany me; when that escort is prepared, I shall leave Jerusalem. By to-morrow, at the ninth hour, I expect every thing to be in readiness."

Her manner, and the purport of her speech, surprised him: at first he was inclined not to obey her mandate; but he knew her resolution, and was aware of the importance of her quitting the capital, and therefore reluctantly obeyed.

The retinue was not numerous; but the people assembled in spite of the attempts of Pheroras to prevent them,

and, remembering the mildness of the government of Hyrcanus, his sorrows, and disgraceful end, lamented loudly, spoke in their customary enigmatical manner of his bloody death, and referred to his grandson, the young and admired Aristobulus. Mariamne's face was covered, but her agitation was so great as to render support necessary, which added to the excitement of the people, and symptoms of tumult ensued. Some elders soothed them; but neither they nor the guards could prevent a great portion of the population from following the body of Hyrcanus far beyond the city. Many girded up their loins, took their staves, and were resolved to follow it to Modin.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Although the procession had advanced more than half way on the night of their departure, the morning light shewed distinctly the lofty Modin, surmounted by the mausoleum built by Simon for his race. Seven pyramids of polished stone indicated the sepulchre of himself and family. When the people saw the noble monument shining in the morning sun, and reflecting the beams from its polished surface, the glories of the illustrious heroes were recalled, and cries of lamentation and anger were strangely mingled. Pheroras was wroth, and commanded silence; but his orders and his threats were equally unheeded. They toiled on during the day; and when the foot of the mountain was gained, the western rays glanced their level light on the opposite side of the hill, leaving the eastern aspects of the pyramids and the mountain-side in clear deep shadow, which was cast far along the plain, and covered, as with a mourning veil, the sad assemblage. They wound up the steep ascent, and reached the extensive tombs as the departing orb of day tinged the heavens with golden light.

On approaching the great mausoleum, the murmurs and cries of the people increased, until Pheroras was on the point of using violence. Mariamne uncovered her wan and woe-worn face, and thus, in a clear and melancholy voice, addressed them—

" My race was glorious, mighty men of fame;
The memory of their deeds remaineth:
But their fame is covered with darkness.

I weep not for the dead,
For his sorrows are passed away :
I make no mourning for our father,
For he dwelleth in Abraham's bosom :
The Asmonean race hath vanished in gloom ;
It hath set in darkness like an evening shadow.
Forbear ye to cry ——
Make no mourning for the dead ——
The last of our race is hidden with stealth in the tomb :
His soul was not filled with good,
But sorrow was his earthly portion ;
His pilgrimage hath been through a vale of thorns,—
A vale ending in darkness and death :
His name and his race shall be covered with darkness."

As she uttered these solemn words she mantled her face, and, pointing to the mausoleum, went on. The people obeyed her, and, excepting the even tramp, no sound was heard until they reached the entrance of the tomb. A shriek from Alexandra and some of the women attracted the immediate attention of the mourners. A figure with matted locks, a ragged wolf-skin round his body, a staff and massive pilum of spikes in his hand, rushed out, and, bounding on the stone which formed the entrance, looked round with frenzied stare ; he shook his long grizzled beard, ground his teeth, waved round his head the massive pilum, then, in a voice that thrilled in every ear, called aloud—

" Is he here ? Is the usurper here ?
Is the murderer of Aristobulus here ?—
No remnant of his race remaining ?
I am the *avenger of blood,* and will slay him.
In the cave of Engedi I warned him ;
A spirit among the tombs of the dead forbad him—
Saying, as he rushed by like a vision of light,
' *Thou shalt do no murder !*'

But, like the simoom and pestilence,
Like the angel of sin and death,
Herod hath spared neither the old nor the young."

As these words passed his lips, Alexandra and Mariamne called out in bitterness of soul; at the same moment the fierce Pheroras exclaimed, as he transfixed the demoniac with his javelin—

"Cursed be the tongue that revileth the king! let him die the death!"

The pilum fell from the hand of the dying Menahem; he raised himself on his knee, held the weapon that was in his body, and said more faintly—

"Mariamne, stay! nay, fly not!"

They stood gazing on the dying demoniac. He seemed for a time bewildered, then articulated—

"The tormentors leave me; angels beckon me away; the dire delusion's gone, leaving remnants of truths engraven on my soul."

He looked on Mariamne, then added, in a voice of sorrow, faltering with the gasp of death—

"Lone daughter of misery, Destruction waves above thy head his dismal pennons, dripping with a brother's and a grandsire's blood—thy husband slew them, and will——"

A sudden spear-thrust from Pheroras closed his lips for ever.

Mariamne, trembling, called out, as she fell into her attendants' arms—

"Seize him!"

If the foreign satellites about him had not drawn their swords and bent their bows, the people would have well obeyed her orders. Pheroras sternly commanded them to deposit the body and depart, carrying the queen to the place appointed for their night's reception. Dermah refused to obey the order, loudly declaring that the queen

had fainted, and should only be removed from the place of blood. Pheroras was compelled to accede, and she was borne to the neighbouring half-ruined and deserted village. Mazrah appeared from among these wretched abodes, and was immediately summoned to attend her.

The night had advanced before she was well enough to be taken, with her mother, to the tent prepared for her on the plain.

On the succeeding morning, she sent a letter to Pheroras requiring him to return, and positively refusing to proceed, if either he or his men remained with them. Sohemus, at the same time, inferred by his manner, that he was assuming the direction of an affair left by the king to his guidance. The chief object of Pheroras being gained, that of removing Mariamne from the capital, he unceremoniously retired with his band, leaving them to pursue their journey with Sohemus, and the treasurer's escorts.

Doris, who had dwelt, since the marriage of Mariamne, at Samaria, had heard of her intended journey to the fortress near Antioch, and sent messengers with fruits and presents to meet her, and invite her to repose and recruit herself at her habitation. She gladly accepted the proposal; for though they had not met since that time, the interchange of presents and kind offices had continued between them. The intelligence of Herod's tyranny, and the deaths of Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, were also known to her, and had excited in her some mistrust. On the queen approaching Samaria, a great assemblage of people came out to meet her, and testified their feelings by their words and manner. Special messengers came from Doris to conduct them, and to offer welcome to Mariamne. No sooner had they, according to the custom, knocked at the portals, than they were thrown open, and Doris first assisted Mariamne to alight, then received her in her arms, and they

wept in silence on each other's neck. They retired together, when she brought her refreshing water, and washed both her hands and feet, and anointed her with odours, and comforted her. Mariamne was sensibly affected at her kindness, and could not refrain from shedding tears as she said—

"Grief levelleth all distinctions; the proud and the poor in sorrow of heart will meet and forget their wrongs; the separated will unite, and the enemies forgive and embrace. O Doris, I never wronged you in thought or deed: all things are in the hands of God; it hath pleased him to afflict me with sorrows that I cannot number, and with fear of heart I cannot name; he will hear the cry of the fatherless and oppressed, and give rest unto my soul. If in days that are past, before experience was mine, I thought Israel demanded me to sacrifice myself for her, and thus brought sorrow to your heart, forgive your handmaid, forget your injuries, and let me share the solace of your friendship during the days which I must sojourn here; they are numbered, for my heart is broken with sorrow, though my soul is not, and shall not be, subdued."

Doris embraced her, replying—

"As Ruth clave unto Naomi, so will I cleave unto you; I know you were sore pressed, and that your heart misgave you when consenting to become the wife of Herod. I felt as you would, if you had been a repudiated wife; if the wicked Salome had not prompted me, we should never have disputed. Now let us mingle our tears, and seek comfort in our sorrow; we will remain here together."

The escort with Alexandra approached, and Doris was compelled to leave the queen to receive her. She performed every customary rite of hospitality, and even gave the first cold draught from the deep well to the thirsty horse that bore her guest. The attendants had a banquet prepared

for them; but as the days of mourning had not expired, they remained within the armon. The affection of Doris, and the tranquillity, did much towards composing Mariamne, and enabling her to collect her thoughts, and prepare herself for any events that might occur.

Babarrah had escorted her children to the fortress, and sent to inform her that the castle was prepared for her reception. She was desirous of seeing her infants, and also hastened her departure since Salome was on her route to Samaria, previous to her proceeding to Massada. She thought but little of the region through which she passed, though it was celebrated at every step for the deeds of warriors, and the wonders performed in days long gone. On descending into the vale of Daphne, a crowd of unexpected thoughts rushed into her mind, and she almost unconsciously took a retrospective view of all that had happened to her from her fears of that mighty ruler, who was now with his vile paramour driven from their high estate, and struggling for existence.

Salome had contrived to visit Samaria, for the purpose of obtaining all the information she could relative to Herod, the queen, and the affair at Modin, of which much had been rumoured abroad. She had been for some time in great anxiety lest Cæsar should dethrone her brother for having zealously supported his rival, in which case she thought it more than probable that the diadem would be restored to Alexandra, as the only remaining person of the regal race, which would effectually reduce her to a lower station, and prevent her accomplishing her unaltered determination to wreak her vengeance on the wretched Mariamne.

Doris and Mariamne parted with increased mutual affection, and with the promise of the latter to sojourn again with her when she returned to Jerusalem.

After Mariamne left the capital, Salome had obtained access to the palace, and was desirous of penetrating into her private apartments; but was prevented by an old and faithful chamberlain, who respectfully but firmly told her, that his orders from the queen were positive, and therefore she could not be permitted to enter that part of the palace. She returned a malicious smile, and muttered as she departed—

"This queen excludes me from my brother's house."

Her spies had ascertained that Mazrah had been found at Modin, and consequently must have preceded her; she knew also that he had been at Samaria; but when he quitted the city, or where he had gone, she could not discover. Those facts she treasured up in her mind, as important weapons, and waited with impatience for her brother's return; although, during the interval, she never ceased trying to add to her information, or employing her thoughts in arranging what she possessed, that she might use it to the best advantage. She tried every art to win Doris to her opinions, and exerted all her cunning to ascertain what had passed between them. When she had effected her purpose, she quitted Samaria for the fortress of Massada.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Sohemus and the treasurer had exceeded their instructions, by permitting the queen and her mother to remain at Samaria; they had consulted on the subject, and thought it wiser to accede to any wishes their prisoners, for so in fact they were, might express, lest they should be frustrated in the execution of their orders to get them safely within the fortress.

Mariamne had been perfectly aware of the intention; and as she entered a portal of the castle, turned to her guards, and said—

"I knew that I was your prisoner; had it been my wish to return to Jerusalem, or go elsewhere, it was not in your power to have prevented me."

They looked at each other. The queen passed on through the dry close courts, where the lively lizard alone seemed happy, and darted from its retreat in the moulder-ing walls on its insect prey; some wretched captives stared, but paid her homage as she passed, and then resumed their limited and allotted walk. In every court were swarthy sentinels, in savage dresses, and with uncouth arms. No sounds were heard but their tread and challenge, excepting when at intervals the distant uproar of mingled shouts and curses came from some subterranean or far-retired caserne, as if the gaming stake were won and lost. Some bold and hardened female now and then was seen to look from the narrow grates, and coarsely call her companions within to come forward and view the uncommon sight. They as-

cended a steep and circuitous stair, which terminated in a spacious court, surrounded by the backs of lofty buildings: here were many female captives who had been sent in by an advanced legion, and were preserved for them until they returned: many of them were evidently women above the common order; all seemed depressed, and some were the victims of misery. When they saw Mariamne, they at first looked, then prostrated themselves on the pavement, most of them weeping: one among them rushed forward, and falling at Mariamne's feet, kissed the hem of her garment, and exclaimed—

"Queen of Judæa, the Lord be with thee! have mercy on thy handmaid Tezellah, and save her from hopeless degradation and misery."

Mariamne stepped towards her, and raising her, touched her shoulder, and replied—

"Thanks be to the God of Israel for this blessing! I am a prisoner too; but perhaps our keeper's orders relating to me are not so barbarous but that I may redeem my handmaid."

Sohemus, placing his hand upon his bosom, answered—

"Peace attend the queen! we are her servants, ready to obey her."

She immediately demanded the liberation of Tezellah, adding, that if she found on examination she had not been shamefully treated, she would pay a fit ransom to the captor. When the other women heard Mariamne's name, they raised a wail of misery, and besought her protection. One had been torn from the bosom of her husband, who was murdered for defending her; another had seen her infants call to her for aid from amid the flames of their dwelling, but had been manacled, and could not help them; others had been caught at their wells and borne away; and many mourned the loss of those to whom they were betrothed.

They covered their heads with their mantles, and wept in their misery. Mariamne looked on them, as the tear-drops fell from her eyes, and said—

"Children of sorrow, I have no power to help you, or I have the will. I can only weep with you."

She turned to Sohemus and the officers who followed her, and added—

"Are these the trophies of your legions' valour? the weaker vessels, whom God commanded you to love and cherish, and protect from insult! O man, what a paltry wretch thou art! Strip your boasted war and glory of the veil before it, and what remains? Systematic murder, and every brutal passion, tinselled with the pride of prowess, and the vanity of necessary privations. What are ye, mighty captains of the world? Men who possess greater skill and activity than their comrades in putting to death their fellow-creatures; and are arrayed either in the mantle of purblind ambition, or in the livery of knaves or tyrants. Nay, fume not, nor shake your crested helmets; what I have said is *true*. When men stand forth to maintain their religion and territories from licensed plunderers, they deserve the meed of glory. Alas, even then the viler feelings are all ready, like blood-hounds, to slip their feeble leashes, and make poor helpless woman their fated quarry. If you dare to doubt, look before me and receive the lie."

She covered her face; the helpless women wept aloud, and with contemptuous cries of grief and anger, made the crested heroes blush and fret and feel ashamed. She passed on, closely followed by Tezellah, traversed a lofty terrace, and entered that portion of the fortress allotted to her.

Babarrah had taken care that this spacious stronghold should be made as convenient as possible; and availing himself of Herod's unlimited order, had ransacked Antioch for every luxury, and even had earth and aromatic shrubs con-

veyed to the space near her room, that she might not look on the dreary sameness of moats and walls, and unadorned buildings of various and equally uninteresting forms. Her little children greeted her with cries of joy, which overcame her, and she was glad to retire into the recesses of her new apartments, and there refresh herself, and listen to the innocent account of their journey, of which their little minds were full.

The next day, when all the inmates were taking their siesta, she summoned Tezellah, and bade her relate what had happened to her since she fled from Massada. The girl related as follows—

"Blessed be thou of the Lord, my kind and generous queen! I fled because that serpent Salome wished to enthral me, and the wicked Ananeel to make me unfaithful to the queen. First I tried to find the glen of the Essenes, but was unable, and wandered for many days, until I reached the shores of the Dead Sea. There an aged woman and her husband accepted my services, and I dwelt with them. Time passed on, and my desire to hear of those I left at Massada increased so much, that I oftentimes went to the well, and accosted the passengers with such questions as seemed best calculated to obtain the intelligence I longed for, without creating any suspicion. One morning, soon after day-break, I was drawing water, when a tall and beautiful Essene called to me by name; I started, turned, and saw Mazrah. My first questions were concerning the mistress whom I love and honour."

Here she kissed the hem of her garment and wept. Mariamne held out her hand, which she fervently pressed to her lips, then to her forehead, and renewed her tale with greater spirit.

"He told me many things that had happened to you, and that you were married. Will the queen let me narrate

all that next occurred to me? I know not if I should; yet truth has always seemed to me the wiser and safer course."

Mariamne was interested, and bade her proceed.

"Mazrah said to me, 'Damsel, can you keep a secret, and serve the queen?' I scarcely deigned to say more in answer, than, if he doubted it or me, not to trust me. He thought for a time, then said, 'I will see your mistress; meet me here at sunset.' What passed between them, I know not; she told me to obey him. I was at the spring waiting for him. Before he came, some other damsels arrived; at length he appeared, and courteously asked me for a draught of water. As I gave the pitcher to him, he whispered, 'Be ready to go with me the second hour of the second watch.' It was a fearful time to leave my home; but with Mazrah I felt safe; and then I could have dared any thing for my queen. He came at the second hour, and taking me by the hand, led me to the shore, placed me in a little boat, seized the oars, and in a moment his giant strength hurried the bark along with great speed. The moon was rising over the Arabian hills, and shed a stream of golden light across the sea and illumined all the shore; suddenly the bark inclined towards the beach, and when I thought that we were about to land again, he rowed with greater speed down a narrow creek, at the end of which was a lofty cavern. I was afraid, and besought him to stop; but he replied, 'Fear not; the God of Israel is our guide, and hath willed what his servants shall do.' This consoled me, and gave me more courage, though my heart misgave me when I saw the crags high above me, and heard the echo of the plashing oars within the lofty cavern. The moonbeams shot far into this subterranean river, and served to make the rugged crags and gloomy recesses more frightful to look at. Again the vessel turned; Mazrah

bade me not to fear, as we glided down a narrow channel in deep darkness; he no longer used the oars, but kept his staff extended, and gently prevented the boat from running against the sides. At length a slight sudden shock, and the rushing up of the water, proved that we had landed. Again he took my hand, and said, 'Come with me; and if you see any one you know, and hear strange words, heed them not, until you hear a plot for murder; then scream with horror, and rush down the path up which I now will take you, and wait here for me: again I tell you, fear not, for no one can discover you.' I toiled up a winding path, quite dark, holding by his hand: at last I saw a glimmering light, and heard wild maniac mutterings; and directly afterwards passed through a narrow crevice in the rock, and found myself on a ledge of stone screened from observation, at the side of an enormous cavern: far below me I saw, near a gushing spring, a large fire, and by it a man clothed in skins, muttering and crying: the blaze and smoke rose high; but, notwithstanding, I could not see the top, nor far on any side. I stood concealed from the possibility of discovery, and soon heard the echo of approaching footsteps: my fear was excited, when on looking round for Mazrah, he was not there. The footsteps approached, and I thought that he was coming, when, guess my surprise at seeing — may I tell you?"

The queen, whose curiosity was excited, said quickly —

"Yes, whatever it may be."

"O my adored mistress, I saw Herod and Babarrah emerge from the gloom, and approach the man who was near the blazing fire."

Mariamne's lip grew pale, but she commanded her to go on.

"The king spoke to him of prophecy and other awful things; then promised him great rewards. He approached

still nearer, and I saw by the flame-light that his face was pale, and that he trembled—yes, the mighty Herod trembled. My heart beat when I saw this scene below me, and not far from the king the calm Babarrah, gazing on him with a look that seemed to read the deepest secrets of his soul. That look made me quake; for I was sure that he would not dare to fix his eyes so on the king, if something dreadful was not thought of. The very recollection makes me feel afraid."

Mariamne, who had wrought herself up to hear whatever might be told, said in a calm voice, tinctured with command —

"Go on!"

"O my well-beloved mistress, he went nearer, and asked if he should reign long, who were his enemies, and —and if your brother would deprive him of the throne: the maniac answered him in loud warning words, the flames from the fire rose higher, and the night-birds screamed and wheeled around, and I could not hear distinctly what was said, until he asked if Aristobulus should still live. Menahem, for so the demoniac was called, replied, as I shrieked with terror and rushed through the crevice, and never stopped until I heard the rippling water at my feet; then I sat down and trembled. Awhile after, Mazrah returned; he did not come down the winding path, but from some avenue not far off: he cheered me, and we went back to my dwelling. As we glided along, he said—'Tell no one what you saw; I have not effected all I wished: the terror your screams excited may produce what I desired to effect in other ways.' He led me to my home, bade me be secret, and that he would soon return: I longed to come to you."

At the latter part of this recital, Mariamne's eyes had become fixed, every muscle seemed stiffened, and she was

with her right hand unconsciously twisting the silk covering of her cushioned seat. A thrilling low-toned cry of agony burst from her trembling lips, and she sat as if horror had seized her in his convulsive grasp. Tezellah was greatly alarmed, and sprinkled some water on her face, and even gently shook her by the arm. Mariamne recovered sufficient strength and composure to say —

"Leave me now to sleep; your tale is very dreadful, but I think you may have been deceived."

Tezellah obeyed her mandate, and left poor Mariamne to endure all the agony of deeply suspecting that her husband was really guilty of her brother's blood. Hope taught her to see with instinctive rapidity that the circumstance could not prove it, but convicted Herod of jealousy, superstition, and fear of her injured race. Her peace of soul had long been destroyed: the tale she had just heard only added to her misery, by heightening all her suspicions and giving reality to her dreadful forebodings, and for a time she rapidly compared them. Many occurrences, and these facts, with what she had heard and what she knew had been the opinion of the people, and the dying words of Zillah, made an impression on her mind so closely approaching to conviction, that she could not conceal from herself the weight of evidence against the king. When she saw her children, and their father's features were recalled, she almost looked on them with disgust; then turned and caressed them, as if she had been unjust. All these circumstances excited suspicions of her own and her children's safety, and she determined to exert her power to learn from Sohemus all he knew.

Alexandra had done little more than lament, complain, and upbraid, since their arrival, and thus added to her daughter's perplexity. Mariamne summoned Tezellah, di-

rected her to keep secret the tale she had heard, even from Dermah; and on the next day, at the same hour, to return and finish her narrative.

The narrative of Tezellah revived the spirit of the queen, which accumulated grief had naturally depressed, and prevented from acting with that vigour of which she was capable.

Tezellah continued her narrative on the seventh hour of the ensuing day, when the inmates of the palace were reposing.

"Peace be to my beloved mistress! my strange adventure seems to affect my queen more than I thought it would. But why should she be kept in ignorance of what most concerns her? The place where I dwelt was retired, and far removed from the habitations of men; and until Mazrah came again, we only heard that the nation was bewailing the unexpected death of Aristobulus. He wept, and upbraided himself, and darkly inferred that he might have saved him; and once, while lamenting, said, 'I considered more than was wise what my princess would feel if she were told the danger.' Oftentimes he would sit near the sea and lament, though he tried to hide, like his sect, what he felt. When within our house he was always serene, excepting the first time he told us the dreadful story; but I suspected that all was not right, and watched him when alone, and saw how nature strove against his precepts. Many times I found him in company with the demoniac Menahem, over whom he possessed complete control.

"Before the years of my servitude were completed, the happiness of my mistress was mingled with the leaven of jealousy: I was innocent; and, taking from her hand the price of my labour, departed. I joined a caravan going to Parthia, but falling sick on the way, I was left at a lonely

village, where it was long before I was restored. I wandered past Gennesareth, and was hired as a nurse to a Syrian captain's child, and followed him to Samosata. After the capture of the city, he escaped with us to a wretched village in the mountains, where he was joined by many more, and with them harassed the Roman outposts. At last he was hunted to his stronghold, and died fighting over his infant. The village was burned, the men destroyed, and I was brought a captive here."

Mariamne questioned her on many parts of her narrative, but gained no farther information. Day succeeded day, and yet no intelligence of Herod reached them, and nothing occurred to break the dull monotony of that dreary life. Alexandra did little more than weep, and vent her anger against her daughter and the king. Dermah was more than usually downcast, for her husband was not allowed to enter the fortress, but compelled to return to Palestine. Mariamne passed her hours in educating her children, in reinvigorating her mind, which she felt had been weakened by sickness and sorrow, in arranging her thoughts, pondering on all that she had heard, and in devising plans for more decided conduct whenever an opportunity of acting occurred. She conversed much with Dermah, but always avoided speaking of her husband, from a fear of betraying the suspicions she harboured of him. The apprehension in which she lived for the fate of her children and herself, led her to determine with Dermah to learn what orders Sohemus had received concerning them.

It had always been the opinion of Sohemus, that Cæsar would deprive Herod of his crown, and probably of his life; yet he was resolved to wait a limited time, without incurring even the risk of blame; and therefore respectfully but decidedly performed the duties imposed on him. He was

too much of a courtier not to be certain that the king would rather be pleased than otherwise at his acquiescing in every wish of the queen, that interfered not with the chief reason for which she was immured in that retired place. He therefore exerted himself to obtain the liberation of those captive women whom Mariamne deemed unjustly seized. She, perceiving his readiness to oblige her, made his conduct a reason for expressing her approbation, and bestowing on him distinguished marks of her bounty, and so prepared him to become an easier conquest: Dermah acted with her, and they soon brought him to terms of intimacy, and discovered, after a short time, his opinion of Herod's affairs, and his belief that if any evil happened to him, the Asmonean race would be sought for, as the rightful inheritors of the Jewish throne. This information being gained, the queen and Dermah soon constituted him, in appearance, their chief counsellor; and having thus far won him, suffered him to revel in his pleasing delusion until every suspicion of their intention was lulled.

Mariamne and Dermah despised policy and duplicity; but, in the present instance, the former deemed her life in jeopardy, and her children exposed to danger; the latter considered herself called on to assist her friend in this extremity, and thought that her husband was not in perfect security, and knew full well, that when a ruler falls, the ruin crushes those near his person: they both felt that they were unprotected women, imprisoned in a distant fortress, and surrounded by men against whom they could not apply force, and therefore were justified in using the only means within their power.

The first favourable opportunity that occurred, the queen addressed Sohemus—

"Has no intelligence yet reached you from Rhodes, of what transpired between the king and Cæsar?"

"The winds have been boisterous and foul, and perhaps the messengers were sent by sea, as the country between us and Rhodes is unsettled, and, the scouts say, filled with bands of stragglers from the routed armies."

"This long delay, Sohemus, makes me more than usually apprehensive for Herod's safety. What is your opinion?"

"I should deceive you, were I to say that I have no apprehension of Cæsar's depriving Herod of some of his worldly goods, for all the assistance he gave his rival."

"Sohemus, if any evil were to happen to Herod, can you depend on the fidelity of the garrison either to assist him or protect us?"

"I should hope that there will be no necessity for exerting such influence."

"In case unfavourable information should reach us of his proceedings, would it not be wiser for us to return directly to Jerusalem?"

"Permit me," replied Sohemus, "to inquire of your majesty the foundation of that question."

Mariamne with earnestness answered —

"The utility to him would be of the greatest importance, for I should be ready to become the regent until he could escape and resume his power."

Sohemus was at a loss to reply, when Dermah simply asked him —

"If any serious disaster should befall the king, and we were not to return to Jerusalem, where would you advise us to seek an asylum?"

Sohemus was more perplexed than before, and hesitatingly replied —

"If such misfortune should happen, we must act according to circumstances."

Mariamne asked him, with an air of surprise —

"Have you no instructions, in case such an event should occur?"

Sohemus was confused: on seeing his embarrassment, Dermah lightly remarked—

"So, the queen has discovered your neglect and want of generalship, in not having decided on your means and place of retreat, in case of defeat. I think, Sohemus, that you had better go and improve yourself in military tactics before you undergo another examination, or give some answer to the unwarlike women in your charge, and say, by chance, to Tadmor in the wilderness, or to the oasis of Thebes, and tell them that they are both close to us, and somewhat nearer Rome."

Their raillery was not understood, and exhibited to their keen penetration that he had some secret orders, which he was unwilling to tell them. Mariamne added one more question, as she kept her unchanging eye fixed on his, while Dermah watched his countenance unperceived by him—

"If Herod were not to return, how long should we remain in this dismal fortress?"

He was now deeply confused, and was at a loss for a reply; she thought it imprudent to excite his suspicions by too pointed a scrutiny, and with a kind voice remarked—

"It would be better for us all, that you ascertained this point. Would it not be wiser for you to go and write a despatch to Herod, and send it either by sea or by some trusty courier?"

He availed himself of the dexterous means she had given him to escape, and left them, professing his intention of immediately pursuing her suggestion.

As soon as they saw him cross the rampart, and were confident that he could not hear, they communicated their suspicions to each other, and resolved at another favourable

hour to follow up their investigation. Dermah proposed, if possible, to communicate with Babarrah, through an Egyptian whom she had seen among the household. Alexandra had, from motives of curiosity and discontent, assailed the treasurer in a similar manner, and given him to understand that she was unmarried and wanted a protector. The ambitious treasurer heard not in vain this lament, and thought how he best might win her. Only a few days passed, during which they had, with infinite address, flattered and won upon their keeper, so as to have brought him to that point, where few men can refuse their confidence to a respected and admired woman.

If the operations of the human mind were closely watched by us, we should quickly ascertain, that usually many influences, possessing various degrees of power, combine to produce a decided opinion or action. Thus it was with Sohemus; he was much inclined to think that Herod would be deprived of his power, and probably put to death; therefore the chance of his becoming acquainted with any transgression of his orders was not great; he believed that if this occurrence ensued, the queen would remain at least regent of the kingdom, and be able to reward and advance him; he felt his vanity gratified at the confidence of Mariamne, and highly delighted at the sweetness of her manner towards him, and at the distinguished marks of her approbation, sometimes not privately bestowed. Dermah's mode of consulting him gratified his self-estimation, as she was acknowledged to be a highly gifted woman; all this operated like sounds of sirens on his soul, and lulled his observation and reflection, as if he were a reveller on enchanted ground. When the two allies agreed that he was in a fit state for them to proceed, they, in casual conversation, thus pursued their end.

"Is your courier yet returned, Sohemus?"

"Blessed of your people! he has scarce had time to get thither," was the reply.

"My anxiety to hear has outstripped my reflection, or I should have remembered that it was farther from this dismal stronghold to Rhodes, than it is from the city of peace to Bethlehem."

Dermah agreed with Mariamne by saying—

"My expectation, too, prompted me to inquire, for I dislike to live not knowing to-day where I shall go, or what I shall do on the morrow."

Mariamne ceased for a moment to ply the threads, and asked, with some concern—

"Sohemus, have you ordered your courier to make the inquiry of some faithful friend, who might be acquainted with the king's intentions, if any evil had happened to him?"

He replied, with some affectation of surprise—

"The thought never entered my mind."

She looked at him with unfeigned melancholy, while a sigh of true sorrow heaved her bosom, and said—

"Ah, I hoped that you had more concern for those committed to your charge, but you have little indeed: I should have had more thought for the dog that looked to me for protection."

This natural appeal was more than he could bear in his present state of feeling, and he rejoined, with some warmth, as the blood flushed his cheek—

"Most respected and adored queen! think not that Sohemus has so little concern for you and yours."

Dermah quietly remarked—

"Then you have some plan by which we are to be regulated, in case of Herod's defeat at Rhodes."

He rose to depart, saying, as he did obeisance to Mariamne—

"Forgive my unwillingness to communicate my orders; they were entrusted to me, and should not be repeated—"

Mariamne looked sorrowfully at him, and replied—

"*But be obeyed with firmness and secrecy.*"

The blood first rose to his face, then he was evidently confused, and stammered—

"That is generally the best way; but mine, I hope, will be rescinded."

Mariamne looked steadily at him, and as a tear stole down her cheek, asked—

"If your orders are not rescinded, would you obey them?"

He could not endure that look, and in a voice that indicated how much his heart was touched, exclaimed—

"No, no; a thousand Herods and a thousand Cæsars should not compel me—no, no!"

Mariamne, whose face was deadly pale, and whose lips trembled, in accents that no true man can bear, said—

"Then you would not murder a poor defenceless woman?"

She covered her face with her hands, and wept. Sohemus wept too, and answered—

"You have guessed the dreadful truth—such were my horrid orders. I promised to obey them, believing that you were not what I have found you; now may I perish, may kingdoms rise or fall, I will not harm you, nay, protect you as long as life remains."

She held to him her trembling hand as she said—

"Let this be the token of a covenant between us. I will not escape, nor raise my people, which I could effect; and you will not obey the—orders of my husband."

He pressed it respectfully, but fervently, to his lips, and thus ratified their covenant.

After he had left them, she simply said to Dermah—

" He possesses more kindness than I thought."

Her friend saw that natural feeling had won a quicker passage to his heart than they could have discovered to his head, with all the powers of their necessary policy. Dermah endeavoured to allay the sorrow and indignation this discovery of Herod's determination that Mariamne should not survive him, had produced. She urged the necessity of secrecy and prudence, not only for her own sake, but for the future welfare of her children. This latter consideration weighed deeply, and did more than all the reasoning of her faithful friend could effect. She wept, and vented, as the tears gushed from her eyes, her indignant feelings against the selfish, fierce, and cruel man to whom she had united herself. Dermah brought her children to her, and said—

" My queen, my friend, for their sakes moderate your just indignation and sorrow. Be assured, that in this spacious and dismal place there are ear-holes, where spies and enemies are placed, to tell every expression that may serve to sanction the ends they have in view."

Mariamne, though she clasped her children, was still too indignant not to express her angry thoughts, and answered—

" Self-preservation is the first law of nature. I will raise the war-cry of Maccabeus among my people, free Israel from oppression, and preserve my life and the lives of my little ones!"

She pressed them still closer to her, and caressed them, as if she felt prepared to defend them to the uttermost extremity. Dermah knelt by her side, and fervently implored her to subdue her anger, lest the evil they dreaded should overtake them. Mariamne's bosom heaved, and she replied, with the deepest emphasis—

" Would to God that we were all either lost amid the

oblivion of the dead, or that our souls were in the pleasant places of Paradise! Even if the soul was doomed to endure the insensibility of the body, it would be preferable to a life of alarm and misery: but I will say no more."

She wept in silence over her children, and the tears of her friend fell too. Weeks of silent sorrow ensued, preying upon her spirits, like the worm on the root of the fading lily.

CHAPTER XXV.

A SUDDEN tumultuous noise in the courts of the citadel attracted the attention of Mariamne and Dermah, as they sat in silence watching the waning hues of the evening sun. They looked from a projecting angle of the terrace, and saw the soldiers hurrying for their arms, and heard their officers loudly calling them to form near the portals: at the same time the tramp of horses and the ringing of armour caught their attentive ears, and presently Herod and his retinue were seen riding up the steep ascent and through the dimly lighted portals. Mariamne started with surprise, but in a moment recovered herself, clasped her extended hands and bent her head as she offered a short and silent prayer. She ought to have met him in the entrance-court, surrounded by her household; but she remained in her apartment waiting his arrival. He quickly dismounted, hastened through the passages and ascents, and with joyous steps approached the folding curtains that separated her room from the ante-halls. Her heart beat no quicker, nor did her lip quiver, at the sound of his approaching steps; for since the time of her discovering his horrid intentions, she had wrought up her courage to support her feelings of detestation, which were greatly increased by her suspicions of his having been the deliberate murderer of her brother. He ran to embrace her: she shielded herself from him, by extending her arm covered with her mantle. He started, and in a voice of anger, and with a look of great surprise, said—

"Mariamne, my beloved Mariamne! I have hastened to you as fast as sails and rowers could waft me, to tell my

much-loved wife that Cæsar has added to our glory and our realm. You look at me as if I had been guilty of some crime in obtaining more of Palestine for our kingdom. No joy at these tidings! No embrace!"

She replied, in a calm and dignified manner—

"None. The prisoner is not wont to love and embrace his unjust, his cruel jailor."

Herod feigned surprise, and said—

"What means this, Mariamne? I am no cruel jailor, but your adoring husband."

He approached her, but she repulsed him, rejoining—

"Keep farther from me: I reject the adoration offered in a prison."

In a more indignant tone, she added—

"How dares a mere warrior, whose descent scarce reaches beyond his father's memory, to imprison a princess of Israel?"

The cheek of the king crimsoned with anger, and he rejoined—

"This the reception of the wife of my bosom!"

She quickly said, in a tone of sorrow and indignation—

"It is the reception of the imprisoned grandchild of Hyrcanus, whom Herod the Ascalonite slew, and then hastened away to secure his kingdom."

The king, from the effects of surprise and rage, could hardly articulate—

"He was a vile hypocrite and traitor, and died a traitor's death!"

With increasing indignation, she replied—

"Fierce Ascalonite, think not to scare me by your terror-importing name, or with your voice and looks. It's false! you slew him, because you feared and suspected, like the viper, the hand that cherished you; and sent your in-

jured wife, to lament his death as a prisoner, to this vile fortress. Leave me, for I hate you!"

She raised her arm between him and her sight, and turned her head away, uttering a sound of indignation and disgust.

Herod raged, spoke incoherent words, and used some threats, which Mariamne hearing, exclaimed—

"You may threaten a poor imprisoned woman, and order an old gray-haired friend to be put to death; but leave me my liberty, and I will quickly shew you that the lion of Judah still can roar, and our warlike tribes will yet defend an Asmonean against the Ascalonite, who would threaten her for being indignant at imprisonment."

His wonder was increased at these bold but injudicious words, and he replied, as he looked at her—

"It seems that I had some cause for fear, and that 'twere well you were left in this secluded stronghold: I intended it as a place of refuge for you, but it proves to have been a safeguard to me."

Still she answered him—

"You have not been to Greece without returning with some of their boasted knowledge—you have gained a little from the sophists there. It needed not more sophistry to condemn Hyrcanus, than you have used to criminate your imprisoned wife. There is a court below, and this place is secluded—you will find an executioner among your train. Poor Mariamne, to whom you made so many fair and loving promises, is ready to shed her blood, and see her little ones dashed against the stones. We will go and join Hyrcanus and my—"

She looked at him while she paused; his heart sunk within him; she then added—

"*My brother!*"

Herod suppressed the shock he felt, and approaching her, said in a tone of the deepest sorrow—

"Then let us go together: without your love I would not live; kingdoms and glory would be to me beggary without it. Here's my sword—slay me, and with my dying eyes let me vow eternal love for Mariamne!"

She was neither dismayed at his shining blade, nor deceived by his words, but sternly answered—

"I wish not to follow your example and imbrue my hands in blood. Alas! alas! I am the only scion of my race, or I would, though you are my husband, know the methods by which poor Hyrcanus met his end. Herod, there is but one more of the dreaded race remaining—here she is—why not end your fears by slaying her?"

She knelt and offered her bosom to his sword, and with imploring accents besought him to kill her. At that moment Babarrah entered, and in a voice that made even the monarch start, exclaimed—

"The Parthian and wilder tribes are within a march of the fortress; your keenest sword will be wanted. I offer no excuse for thus abruptly warning you, for it was my duty."

Herod gazed on him, and left the room, calling out—

"To arms, to arms! close the gates! mount scouts! prepare your engines!"

Then returning to Mariamne, said in a softer tone—

"Come, my own loved wife, you shall not be a prisoner long, for I must have you and the little ones set out for Jerusalem before midnight. You have been unkind, and thought I sent you here to cage you: no, no; it was to preserve you, for I cannot live without you."

He would have embraced her, but she inclined her head, and answered—

"The orders of my lord the king shall be obeyed, and we shall all be ready."

With a conciliatory voice and manner he again addressed her, asking—

"Is there any captain you would prefer to guard you to Jerusalem?"

She immediately requested Babarrah, Reuben, and Jonathan.

The king sent orders to them directly to prepare. During the third watch, the queen and all her retinue left the fortress and proceeded on their journey. It was thought more prudent to keep near the coast until they arrived at Accho, where they rested for several days, and heard from Doris. After they were refreshed, they recommenced their journey, and reached Jerusalem in safety.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Herod repulsed the attack on the fortress, then followed Mariamne to the capital. Amidst all his crimes and toils, his love for her, if it deserved the name, was unabated, and induced him to make great exertions towards subduing the anger and mortification which her undisguised dislike had engendered. At one time anger and love racked him, and strove in his mind for the mastery, making him resolve to punish her contumely; at other times to endeavour to obtain her affections by gentleness and concessions. While in this state, he was summoned to Egypt by the death of Antony and his paramour.

Cypros and Salome had returned to Jerusalem; the former sorrowful and waning to the tomb; the latter meditating new schemes against the queen, and delighting in the alienation which she saw taking place between her and her brother.

During the absence of Herod, Mariamne retired to a house belonging to the king, near the spot where he afterwards erected a splendid palace, for the sake of avoiding Salome, and pursuing that line of conduct which would prevent her husband from supposing that she desired to render herself popular at Jerusalem.

The conduct of the queen towards Herod being known in the palace, soon became a topic of conversation, and reached the ears of Mazrah. His feelings were deeply interested, and after a sojourn in the capital of some days, he reached the spot where Mariamne was. Babarrah commanded the guard of honour in attendance on her, and was

soon accosted by the Essene when riding alone, and induced by him to appoint a time for meeting him in private. Dermah, when she heard of the proposal, entertained no suspicions of the good intentions of Mazrah; but she expressed an earnest wish that their meeting should take place at Jerusalem, and that he should not be seen near the residence of the queen. Babarrah perceived the wisdom of her advice, and determined to desire him to leave the spot as quickly as possible, and not to return. On the following afternoon, Mazrah met him in a defile close to the garden, and was in earnest conversation, when Tezellah appeared, and requested Babarrah to return, as the soldiers and the attendants of Ananeel, who had come on a visit of ceremony to the queen, were disputing with loud and threatening words. He hastened to the spot, and on his way met Salome, with two attendants, who directly began to urge the same request: on seeing another person with him, she repeated her apprehensions of a disturbance. Mazrah could not avoid being recognised, and therefore directly acceded to it. She made no observation, but her heart beat with pleasure at the discovery. Babarrah and Mazrah were ignorant of the length of time she had been so close to them, but both expressed, by an exchange of looks, that they were suspicious and perplexed: the latter learnt enough from Babarrah to make him leave the place as soon as the tumult had subsided.

Salome and Ananeel had come on the pretext of a visit of ceremony, but in reality to watch what was going on in the household of the queen. After the usual salutations and customs, Salome inquired, "if Mazrah had been long about the household;" and remarked, "that although she had not seen him more than three or four times in some years, it was often for one of his sect." Mariamne answered her with calmness; but a little surprise was perceptible on

her countenance, which was noticed by her enemies. After a few mutual and ceremonious inquiries, they returned to the capital, satisfied with the success of their journey.

Babarrah consulted with his wife on the aspect of their affairs, and on the probable violence of Herod, if the queen should persist in her present line of conduct: their opinions, on the whole, accorded; and Babarrah determined to propose an interview with the queen, attended by his wife.

Mariamne respected them both, and felt for them the attachment of a kindred soul for friends on whose fidelity, counsel, and courage, she could rely.

They met in a small retired room at night. Mariamne was full of apprehension, yet collected, and prepared to hear any proposition with patience. Soon after they were seated, and certain of being secluded, Babarrah thus simply addressed her—

"When my salute of 'peace be with you' has passed my lips, it is no empty sound, but an intense prayer of one who is ready to hazard his life for his queen, and who with his wife are her truest friends. You are the last representative of a noble race, in whom is concentrated many virtues, and who should live to perpetuate them. Princess of Israel, blanch not at the tale that I must tell you, but let it nerve your soul, and make it fit to act with vigour and decision. It is hazardous for a dependent to speak to a queen of her husband. I know not much of your laws respecting marriage, but conclude that crimes are sufficient to sever the contract. Your erring kinsman Antigonus was scourged and slain: he deserved perpetual banishment at least. He was slain by Antony; but at whose suggestion? *Your husband's.* Mariamne, I warned you to nerve your soul; if you will hear more, I will continue; if not, I will close my lips, and fly this treacherous land."

Mariamne, in a low and hollow voice, said—

"Speak on, though it racks my heart, and almost maddens my half-distracted mind! speak on, I say! speak on!"

"Alexandra, your mother, was imprisoned; and if the ruffian Sabbion had earned the price of blood, it was no more than he agreed for with your husband. You cannot bear the trial; but it must be, or we are lost. For the sake of your little ones, for the lives of your friends, again, I say, nerve yourself, and be a daughter of the Maccabees."

Gasping, she repeated her former orders.

"I will go on, the shock had better come at once, though I am loath to deal the blow. Herod is superstitious, and took me to the cavern at Engedi. Tezellah told you enough of the tale to shew the temper of his mind at that eventful time. He caused your brother to be murdered."

Mariamne grasped his arm, and looking on his face, said, in a stifling voice—

"Swear that your words are true!"

Babarrah knelt, bent his head to the earth, raised his clasped hands to heaven, and said—

"By the unutterable Name, my words are true!"

She drew deep inspirations, then, as if her spirit had resumed its power, said with firmness—

"Monster of hell! I renounce him, and will no more call him husband. Tell on—you cannot hurt me now; despair can laugh at fear: tell on—I order you!"

She tried to laugh, but it was a horrid heart-rending sound she uttered. Babarrah, much moved, obeyed her mandate—

"Hyrcanus was falsely toiled by Herod's order, and cut off to pacify his fears."

"I told him so—I told him so!"

At these words Babarrah and Dermah were surprised;

the latter looked alarmed, which Mariamne perceiving, added—

"You came in when I besought him to slay me; 'twas then I told him so; and from that hour have banished him from my embrace."

After a pause, the Arab continued—

"You are in jeopardy, and your children too. Herod still prefers you to all other human things, and would now sacrifice a hecatomb of victims to appease you; but you are the last of the dreaded race—you are suspected by him."

"Of what?"

"Of aspiring to separate dominion, and of—forgive me—being *more partial* to another."

She bent her head on Dermah's bosom to hide her burning and indignant blushes. He went on thus—

"If you pursue the same course that you have done of late, he will slay *you*, and then *your children*. We are prepared to fly where no Herod, nor even Cæsar, will dare to follow. We offer you to fly with us, and I will ensure your children's safety and your own."

Mariamne was surprised, hesitated, then replied—

"You have told me a dreadful tale, and confirmed the doubts that haunted me. Let him slay me—the tomb is my only resting-place—the only refuge for a broken heart. I fear for my babes, and would send them with my much-loved Dermah. No, it cannot be. Were I to fly, he would pursue farther than the track young Ammon opened; and he might suspect me; and no Asmonean shall be suspected for flying from death in its most hideous form—by a husband's hand. My poor babes I would trust with you, but them he will not injure. Fly to your desert homes, and we shall meet again; for I know that our Redeemer, our Avenger, liveth; and that He, the last, shall stand above the dust—shall triumph over death. Go, my Dermah, go with

your faithful husband, and sometimes think of poor Mariamne, who will, from this hour, sit silent, and get into darkness, and no more be called the queen of kingdoms. Farewell, a long farewell!"

She clasped Dermah to her bosom, but shed no tear, though both her friends wept bitterly. At length Dermah said—

"I will not leave you, and I know my husband will not; I too have a son, who might be made a sin-offering for his parents, were we to be suspected. Woe has begirt us like a hunter's snare, and we cannot escape, unless we break the toils and fly to the desert; peace will await us there. My queen, my friend, fly with us, and leave the fierce Ascalonite; he will be tamer when all his fears are removed. Our son waits but for a signal to follow us."

"Ah, Dermah," she sorrowfully rejoined, "you know not the full import of your words—peace await me in your deserts! No, never more will peace spread her dove-like wings above me. Memory will follow me as long as my soul has a local habitation. 'Tis said that in the grave there is no remembrance:—of misery it must be; for there the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. You are in danger; fly! I implore you to fly, and leave me to my fate."

Babarrah looked upon her, and said in a broken voice—

"Never; while a twilight gleam of hope remains—never!"

The proud Arab could not bear that his weakness should be seen, and went sorrowfully away, leaving Dermah with the afflicted Mariamne, who remained awake, and during the silence of the night recalled in vivid colours the dreadful dream she had before her marriage, and traced to a certain point its fulfilment, but could only feel some undefined horrors at the part yet unfulfilled.

On Salome's arrival at Jerusalem, to her great surprise she saw the king in the palace, much displeased at not finding Mariamne there. The artful, implacable woman availed herself of Herod's irritated state of mind, and after embracing him, said—

"Ananeel and I have just returned from the queen; who might as well have been here to receive her husband, my lord the king."

"There was a time when she would not have insulted me in so open and marked a manner. Perhaps she has society in her retreat far preferable to mine."

The tone of chagrin in which the monarch pronounced the latter portion of this speech induced Salome to say—

"Our reception was so inhospitable, that we gladly returned to Jerusalem. There is with her that subtle Arab in whose company the good Aulenus was slain, and the Essene Mazrah, who so captivated Mariamne in the glen where those wretched fanatics have their hiding-place."

Herod looked much discomposed, and replied—

"I know my haughty unkind wife to be true to me; but it is passing strange that this Essene should be so often where she is."

She followed up her success, and added—

"It is curious, and so contrary to the custom of his sect. He was at Modin when that old traitor Hyrcanus was buried."

"At Modin!" repeated the king to himself, with great emphasis.

This Erinnys continued—

"And he was at Samaria too when Mariamne visited poor Doris. Send for Doris, to shame this proud usurper of her throne, who is so fond of the company of the beautiful Essene—he is said to be very beautiful—he was in deep consultation with Babarrah when I saw him."

The king looked more disturbed, and asked—

"What were they consulting about? You heard something of consequence?"

"Nothing. I only heard the Essene ask the Arab, 'when you would return.' I think I saw this Mazrah near the palace when I entered."

Herod broke off the discourse, and soon afterwards called a satellite, and asked him if he knew the person of Mazrah, and received confirmation of Salome's report. He ordered him to be immediately seized, and put into the prison of the tower of Antonia.

The satellite left the monarch, and unfortunately found Mazrah loitering near the gardens, and immediately conveyed him to the dungeon.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The certainty of Herod's guilt, and the dread in which Mariamne lived of being the cause of irremediable misfortune to her friends, wrought her up to the hopelessness of despair. Sleep fled from her eyes, and she looked as if the corroding worm of death was preying on her heart. Cypros perceived the state in which she was, and hinted to Herod her danger; all her attempts to induce him to pursue towards her, and those whom she numbered among her friends, a more confidential manner, were frustrated by the secret insinuations of Salome, who was watching her victim waning in misery to an early tomb. Cypros was deeply affected at Herod's conduct, and deprecated his headlong actions; for one day she saw him scatter wealth among his minions, order palaces, towers, and public buildings to be erected; on the next, exact revenue from his oppressed provinces, and drain his people of the produce of their industry. She had long been approaching her last home, and her gray hairs were being brought to it with sorrow by the conduct of her son. She coveted the society of Mariamne, and soon convinced her of the sincerity of her friendship. Alexandra was more with her daughter than usual, and seeing her the prey of hopeless mental agony, felt much more than might have been expected from a character so little susceptible of any impressions.

Herod at that time saw but little of his family; for he was preparing to escort Cæsar, with great magnificence, from the Egyptian confines of Judæa to Antioch. Before he left Jerusalem for that purpose, he ordered Mazrah to be

privately strangled. Tezellah heard of the execution of the horrid mandate, and with bitter grief related it to Mariamne. The shock added to her dread, and she repented that she had not flown when Babarrah proposed it to her: she made no attempt to conceal from herself that Mazrah had been sacrificed to the fears and jealousy of the king. As she lay awake on her sleepless couch, and retraced the events of her life, and bewailed the murder and degradation of her race, her mind would sometimes wander, and picture scenes of happiness that might have awaited her if she had been the wife of Mazrah, and dwelt in the peaceful glen where she first had seen him. At that silent hour she no longer concealed from herself that there had been some latent feelings in her heart, which might have sprung forth into all the ardour of the noblest love, but which duty, circumstances, and grief, had ever kept almost unknown: now he was numbered with the dead, she dared to remember him, and regret that her lot had not been cast with his. As she was the cause of his death, many tears were shed by her in all the silent bitterness of sorrow. Some slight circumstances led her to believe that the feelings of humanity had mastered the precepts of the Essene, and that he had loved her, though a queen and a wife. That knowledge rendered his death not the less painful to her; for as it was distant, respectful, and unspoken, she could not help, as a woman, remembering it with kindness.

Old Cypros knew that her end was drawing near, and exerted herself to reconcile her family, but in vain. It was nearly midnight when the inmates were called to minister to her in her dying hour. She summoned Herod, Mariamne, and her family, and after bidding them farewell, and blessing them, desired to be left with Herod, to whom she thus spoke—

"My son, my son! if the voice of your dying mother

can penetrate your soul, listen! Like all the children of our first parents, I am but a sojourner and a stranger here, and now about to depart to the far country where they have taken refuge. Your fathers, where are they? gone whence they shall not return — and whither you must go — and where you shall call corruption your father, the worms your mother and sister. My son, you tremble; see, your old weak mother does not fear; nor would you, if you would think of the measure of your days, and discover how frail you are."

She raised herself on the pillow, and when her breathing would permit her, spoke more firmly, as she fixed her eyes, now possessing a more than human look, on Herod's —

"Awake your slumbering conscience! bid memory rouse her from her forced sleep! Ah! my mental sight grows clearer as death steals over my earthly frame. Glutted with blood! Herod, I cite thee, by the unutterable Name, to stay and hear my words. On whom should the avenger of blood have wreaked his vengeance when Antigonus was slain? Does the innocent blood of Joseph cry from the ground? When the waters shall yield up their dead, whom will Aristobulus call his murderer? You cannot go; the spirit that prompts my words chains you there: your teeth may close, and the drops trickle from your brow, but you shall not go! Who shed the blood of the priests, and brought down the gray hairs of your friend, the Lord's anointed, to the grave with blood? When the secrets of the dungeon shall be revealed, what will the pious Mazrah say, when asked who slew him? You cannot take your eyes from mine, no more than when the murdered Zillah looked upon you. Trembling sinner! bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days. Warrior, when you wage battle with death, from that war is no discharge, save through the portals of the grave; from thence where will

you pass? To everlasting life, or to shame? Jehovah will bring every secret work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Which does your conscience say that you deserve? The shadow of death passeth before me; what is it that I see? Fearful and terrible things lost in its gloom; and I hear noises as of wailing women, as of women who will not be comforted. Herod, your thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. Weep, mourn, howl, clothe in sackcloth, fast, and commit your works unto the Lord, and your sins may yet be forgiven!"

She raised her dying hand, still keeping her eyes fixed on the fascinated and trembling monarch; then with an effort she raised herself, and continued—

"Lest He tread thee in his anger,
And trample thee in his indignation;
He who will ransom me from the power of the grave,
Who will redeem me from death,
Who will swallow up death in victory,
And wipe the tears from mine eyes."

As these last words passed her lips she sunk back, and was numbered with the dead. Herod fell on the ground, and all the furies of hell seemed torturing his soul with the burning recollections of his crimes. His cries brought the mourners and minstrels, and the palace was filled with lamentations for the dead.

The remains of Cypros were interred with honour. During the days of mourning, Mariamne kept herself within the armon; and after the burial, on the plea of sickness, retired to the secluded place where she had resided while the king was absent.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The behaviour of Mariamne to Salome, for some time, had been marked with a degree of disgust which stung her to desperation, and made her redouble her efforts to bring her to destruction. She waited until Herod had left Jerusalem, then repeatedly sought the society of Azahzel, the king's cup-bearer, and at length held unrestrained intercourse with him. Being a perfect mistress of deception, she wound her web around him, until he almost acted, in every minute particular, under her immediate orders: this was more readily effected, as he had become passionately fond of her. His high situation gave him free access to her; and as the greater number of the attendants had gone either with the king or Mariamne, their illicit meetings escaped detection. She availed herself of his weakest moments, and thus won him to become her instrument.

"My love you cannot doubt; with you I should be happy, only one bitter drop makes me wish to dash the cup from my lips."

"What," replied Azahzel, "can I have left undone that so embitters my happiness, since it affects yours?"

She caressed him, and rejoined—

"You are perfect: it is another that has poured the bitter waters of Marah on my soul. Ah! one who has let it fall on me drop by drop to increase my torture."

She reclined her head on his bosom, and added—

"I want the comfort such a friend as you can give to my soul; for the evil is beyond my power to avoid."

Azahzel looked on the perfidious hypocrite, and his

heart beat with quicker pulse, and, pressing her to him, answered—

"How can I comfort such sorrow of heart? To try and pour the balm into your wounds to-day would only lull the pain; cannot the evil be removed?"

She shook her head, and, sighing deeply, continued—

"No, no; the tormentor of my soul lords it over me, spurns me, upbraids me with my birth, and even ordered that I should not enter her armon."

Azahzel, with surprise, inquired—

"Who can you mean? Surely it is not our haughty queen."

She sorrowfully replied—

"The same, the very same, who is also unfaithful to my brother. I have no husband but you, and should be horror-smitten at the thought. Ah, this same proud, unfeeling tormentor hates you, and will, I fear, soon induce my fond brother to drive you from his presence."

"Salome, she has often treated me like some inferior being, and I have long hated her; now I detest her with deep detestation, since she has persecuted the woman whom I love."

The hypocrite was rejoiced at her scheme working so readily, and went on—

"Now Cypros is gone, I shall have enemies on every side; the deep, designing Dermah, the selfish Alexandra, and the Asmonean. The beasts of the field remove their enemies, and also the stubborn Roman; the Arab and Ethiopian circumvent and slay their foes; even the Israelite is commanded to pursue and kill the man who slew his nearest relation of kindred blood. It seems strange that, having discovered a certain intention in another to destroy us, we have not power to anticipate the deed."

Azahzel, whose feelings of resentment were kindled, thoughtfully replied—

" That must be included not only in the natural law of self-preservation, but in your command."

She again caressed him, and thus followed up her words—

" Few souls are as noble and liberal as my Azahzel's; it was his courage and magnanimity that first won my heart. The enemy is too strong, too great; so we must bear not only our wrongs, but live in jeopardy, without resisting, and perhaps die for our patience."

Azahzel's spirit was excited by her words, and he replied, in a lower, but more emphatic, voice —

" An enemy too strong may be circumvented and ensnared, and so enable an oppressed and broken foe to escape destruction."

This was all she wanted from her dupe, and thus continued her hellish purpose—

" Ah, my beloved, I would save you—for that would be ensuring my own safety; for without you, life would soon pass from me."

He fervently replied—

" I would not live without you. Salome, how shall we save ourselves?"

The fiend hesitated, then answered—

" It would require courage and address. O, I will bear on to the last; for if you were to fail, all my hopes would be blasted, and both for ever lost."

With some affected indignation he rejoined—

" Doubt my address, but not my courage; how would you put them to the proof?"

She allowed her head to sink on her bosom as she said—

" Ask me not, ask me no more; for if your life were the sacrifice, I should die."

He followed her into the recesses of the toils, and thus rejoined—

"We are consulting for our mutual safety; if you would not advise me how to preserve your life, tell me how I may ensure my own."

She looked on him, and, feigning tears, said—

"O Azahzel, talk not of your danger, or sleep will fly me, and misery attend my steps. I know your courage and address would lead you through the Egyptian labyrinth; but for my sake you shall not be exposed; no, we will die together."

She sunk upon his bosom, as if she had swooned with grief. He revived her, and then said, with some degree of fierceness on his countenance—

"You hate me, or you would tell me how to save myself, and thus preserve my love."

She threw back her hair, gazed at him intently, and said, in a subdued voice—

"Death in any shape were preferable to your thinking that I hate you; tell me that you do not, and I will collect my scattered thoughts, and think with you of how we may be saved."

The insensate man answered—

"Doubt not my love, or I will prove it by first plunging my dagger to the heart of our enemy, and then into my own."

With affected fear she said—

"That must not be, or I should have the furies haunt me for urging you to kill yourself. We must be cool, cautious, and secret. Mariamne has been unfaithful to her husband, and therefore by our law deserves death. She would destroy us; so we may preserve ourselves, and only inflict the deserved punishment. To accuse her positively would not do; but, Azahzel, were you to tell her husband that she tried to bribe you — (she whispered to him, then

in a more audible voice continued) — it would lead to farther examination, and then the truth would follow. It is, my Azahzel, but a most fair way to, as you have said, circumvent a stronger enemy, and prevent our own destruction."

He replied without hesitation—

"Our enemies shall not go unscathed; your wishes shall be obeyed; and so while we inflict the just punishment of her crimes, we will defend ourselves. Let our embrace be the seal of our compact."

They parted some hours after, determined to perfect their resolution.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Herod returned from escorting Cæsar, gratified with the manner in which he had been personally treated, and exulting in an increase of territory. His first wish was to prove to his new ally and benefactor the extent of the confidence he reposed in him.

The ill health of Mariamne would have induced her to remain in seclusion, but he summoned her to Jerusalem as soon as he reached the palace. Her reception of him was not more flattering than before; he, however, disguised his feelings under the mask of joy, and after enumerating all the cities and provinces added to his territory, concluded by telling her that he intended to send her eldest son to Rome immediately, to be educated under the eye of Cæsar. Few things could have added to her wretchedness—this was one of them, and for which she was not prepared. On hearing the intention, she looked at Herod, but could not articulate; he was alarmed, and extended his arm to support her; she shrunk from his touch, and said in a hurried voice—

"Slay him, slay him! but, for mercy's sake, send him not to be brought up a heathen, an idolater, a stranger to the religion of his fathers!"

Herod turned from her, and she sunk on a couch; he paced the room, fiercely exclaiming—

"Woman! when will you cease to thwart me in all I do and say? Your idle superstition and prejudices would make you sacrifice me and a kingdom, rather than our son should be brought up in all the knowledge and accomplish-

ments of the Roman court. Would you have him a disciple of the hypocrite Ananeel?"

He paused for a minute, then added, with a look of suspicion and irony—

"Perhaps you would prefer some Essene, like that prowling traitor Mazrah, for his instructor? I have been bearded enough for my vigilance and justice by the women of my family, and will endure it no longer. Keep within your armons, nurse your children, and be pleasant when your husbands honour you with their company."

He would have continued, but she interrupted him by replying, with feelings of indignation, to his uncalled-for attack—

"I should prefer being honoured with your absence; your violence and language are not suited to one born in the station in which Providence placed me. It might suit some Idumean wife, as barbarous as the wild tribes of the desert, but not the daughter of the princes of Israel. If I have power to retain my child, I will."

Herod smiled scornfully, and answered—

"I thought as much, and so removed the boy, who is by this time in a galley, and speeding his way to Rome."

Mariamne's spirit failed her on learning that her child had thus been torn away, and she clasped her hands, and sobbing exclaimed—

"Barbarian! thus to trample on the tenderest ties of nature—to steal away my little one, without one parting look, without one kiss—to send him amid the enemies of my people and my God!"

Her affliction prevented her from saying more, but she knelt and bowed her head to the ground, and prayed that the sea might whelm him, rather than he should be made an outcast from Israel. Herod stamped, and bade her rise,

on pain of more displeasure. The noise attracted Dermah, who was in attendance, and who, feigning a belief that she was summoned, entered the room. Herod, in a voice almost choked with rage, commanded her to retire. The courageous woman fixed her eyes on him, and said, in an unchanged voice—

"I will not go! I will not leave my queen and friend within the powerful grasp of a furious and incensed man, whose voice is fearful, and whose look is vengeance. What! put your hand upon your sword? you cannot frighten me, and you dare not, though a king, offer me violence. I will assist the queen; and if you do not leave the room, I will raise the palace."

She approached the exhausted Mariamne, who had swooned away: seeing her lips pale and her eyes closed, she raised a cry, clapped her hands, and, in an instant, attendants came hurrying in, and the brutal monarch was compelled, from shame, to leave the palace. He muttered vengeance as he went, and vented his fury upon all he met. He sought Salome in the palace where his mother had died. She was in the room where he received her last awful warning. The tempest of his passion had spent itself, and the recollections of that solemn scene were almost converted to realities. The bed on which she yielded up her breath, the carpet on which she knelt, had been purified and replaced. Her words seemed to be repeated in his ears, and the thrilling whispers of conscience told him of all his crimes and cruelties, and the penalties attached to them: he dashed his hand against his brow, and for a time agony of soul threatened him with frenzy. He spurned Salome, beat his bosom, repeated his mother's dying words, and vowed a thousand vows. Salome, who had watched him, approached with gentle tread and the blandest words and tears, when she perceived him more

calm, and induced him to take refreshment and rest, and return to his palace.

He saw no more of Mariamne, but occupied himself for several successive weeks in visiting the cities added to his kingdom, in raising his revenues, and planning vast and various improvements. Sometimes the recollection of Mariamne and the conduct of Dermah crossed his mind, and recalled those feelings of resentment which he thought he was desirous of suppressing. After he had terminated his progress through his new dominions, he returned to Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XXX.

Salome, during the absence of her brother, had matured her scheme with Azahzel, and only waited for an opportunity to execute it: the dissensions between the king and her victim left her in no doubt of one soon occurring.

Dermah and Babarrah lived in anxiety, not only on account of Mariamne, but from apprehensions for their own safety, which were greatly increased since Dermah interfered between Herod and his queen.

Mariamne's health declined, and she felt reckless of all worldly things, excepting her children and friends. The hatred produced by the conviction of Herod's guilt, had increased to a horror of his name; her exalted piety made her desire that her children should be taken far away, and rather bred up in obscurity, than be led into the paths of indifference for their religion and for the feelings of their fellow-men. She sometimes thought, that if Mazrah had been alive, she would have entrusted him with them, since the secrecy of his sect and his friends might have been relied on. The tribes among which Babarrah would take them were not yet converted from their heathenism; and it was opposed to her principles to send them where, if he should die, they might imbibe the idolatrous opinions of those with whom they dwelt. While reflecting on these perplexing and momentous subjects, the intelligence reached her of Herod's intention to return immediately.

He hoped and expected to find her reconciled to the absence of their son, and, after his decided and violent con-

duct, more submissive to his will. He was unacquainted with her conviction of his atrocities; and had not remarked, that as his power and wealth increased, and gratified his ambition, his imperious temper became more overbearing, and his system of policy, to preserve his acquisitions, more sanguinary and subtle.

Mariamne was at the secluded dwelling near Jerusalem, when a summons arrived requesting her to return to the palace. She left this dwelling very early on the ensuing morning, and soon reached Jerusalem. Her dread of meeting Herod had increased; it had not its origin in fear—she was reckless and past that feeling—but from a horror of beholding the man who had dyed his hands in the blood of her kindred. On her arrival, she retired to the armon, and desired to be left to take some repose: she could not sleep, but ruminated on the dreadful deeds which had been perpetrated, and on the miseries that might await her and her children. At the usual hour for the mid-day rest, Herod sent for her to attend him. She arose and went: her face was wan and thin, her hair unbound, and her dark eyes bearing the expression of deep and settled despair. Herod was reposing on his couch, and as she entered held out his arms for her to meet his embrace. She thrilled and turned away, as if disgust was too powerful to be overcome. Though he felt his choler rising, he was unwilling to continue his quarrel, and again attempted to induce her to come to him. She spoke not, but looked at him with loathing and contempt. He sprung from the couch, and angrily exclaimed—

"Is this the return you make me for my love? Is this the reception of my queen after recovering the kingdom of Israel? Is this the effect of the parting lesson I gave you?"

She felt no fear, but her noble spirit rising in her bosom; and he saw it, by the altering expression of her eyes. After looking on him, she replied—

"Your lesson was one by which I could have learnt to hate you, if no other causes had existed to justify my abhorrence. Have you recovered the kingdom to pacify the spirits of the injured Asmoneans? You expect me to return your love. Base Ascalonite! have you proved your boasted love by inducing the assassin Antony to scourge and kill Antigonus? Well may you tremble! Have you proved this vaunted love by drowning my only brother? Have you ratified your proofs by murdering Hyrcanus?"

He drew his dagger, and sprung towards her. She bared her bosom, and exclaimed—

"Exterminate the hated race that fostered you! Think not to scare me by your dagger or your furious looks; my spirit is past all fear! Again I ask you, if you proved your love by commanding the murdered Joseph to stab me, if your fellow-assassin Antony condemned you for your crimes? Where is Mazrah, who saw you murder my poor, ill-fated brother? Unhand me, monster! your touch is a serpent's fang to my very soul! Stab me, if you will; but touch me not! Unhand me! I will meet the keen edge of your steel; but, in mercy, let me not feel your accursed hand!"

The door opened, and Azahzel, instructed by Salome, entered in haste, and falling prostrate said—

"Safety to my lord! I came, thinking that some violence had been offered to you, and to disclose a plot against the king."

Herod had sheathed his dagger, and released Mariamne from his grasp, when the cup-bearer so abruptly entered: his fears were evidently excited by this intelligence, and he loudly demanded—

"Slave, by your life tell all you know! Who are these foul conspirators? where are they? what is their intention?"

Azahzel had risen from his prostrate position, and was kneeling opposite the king; Mariamne, pale and almost exhausted, stood not far off. He made no reply, but looked on the queen and again bent his head. Herod, in a voice of anger and alarm, asked—

"What means this manner and this silence? Do you wish the queen to leave the apartment? Speak, slave, I command you."

The wretch looked at Herod, and replied—

"My conscience bids me not to conceal the deed, Your queen, now standing there, has bribed me to give you *a poisoned cup!*"

Mariamne started, then quickly advanced to the side of Herod, who had clutched his dagger and whose teeth were closed, and in a firm voice exclaimed—

"Thou art a false and suborned traitor, seeking to murder me! Herod, that wretch has accused me falsely. I will have the Sanhedrin convened; I will have my enemies brought forward, and my fame established before my people. With my God my conscience tells me that I am free from crime; and by his unutterable Name I swear it!"

Herod turned to her, and said—

"No wonder that you loathed the husband whom you were about to murder! Azahzel can have no motive for his accusation but his sense of duty; and I believe him, or you would not have despised me, and looked like one bent on some dark deed."

Her eyes had been fixed on his, and she again, with unshaken firmness, replied—

"Believe the wretch or not, as you please; by the great Jehovah you have wronged me! all he says is false.

If it is your wish to see me follow my murdered race, I am ready to go."

She remained, as if desiring death. The blood rushed into Herod's face, and he fiercely exclaimed—

"The Sanhedrin shall be convened, and you shall have your wish; in the mean time, away to your armon!"

He then called for the captain of his guard, and ordered him, on pain of death, to keep the queen within her rooms. Mariamne spoke no more, but followed the officer. Before she was out of hearing, he ordered others, who had assembled, to seize the private chamberlain of the queen, and carry him to the torturers. Mariamne shrieked and fainted when the dreadful sounds reached her, and she was borne away. Dermah hastened to her, while Babarrah went out among the Asmonean guard to observe how they received the intelligence of the seizure of their queen.

Herod descended himself to the dungeon where the faithful chamberlain had been taken: he accused him of concealing his knowledge of the affair, and even of intending his death.

It was in vain the old and tried domestic protested his innocence; the fierce and cruel Herod ordered him to be extended on the rack. The cutting cords were wound round his thighs and arms, and the hot probes prepared. Still the good old man firmly denied his having any knowledge of the transaction, and moreover declared his conviction that the whole was fabricated to ensure the destruction of the queen, and that Salome was her bitterest enemy. At this affirmation the rage of Herod was still greater; he ordered the levers to be worked, and the cords were wound so tight that the blood gushed out, and they were drawn against the bone. At the same time, he commanded the tormentors to thrust the burning probes beneath his nails, and within the sockets of his joints. He looked

with demonlike joy at the wretched man suffering the direst agonies, and again demanded of him the truth. He again declared his firm conviction that Salome and Azahzel had plotted the scheme. As he uttered amid his groans these words, a distant voice was heard exclaiming—

"Let the traitor die the death; for he has falsely accused the sister of the king."

On turning towards the door, Salome was seen through the iron grate; she had followed Herod to the dungeon, to feast her eyes on the victim writhing in tortures; for he was the chamberlain who had refused to admit her into the armon of the queen. Even the savage tormentors were shocked, and closed the grate.

Still more horrid tortures were applied; and amid the excruciating agony, the dying wretch exclaimed—

"Her hatred for you is caused by something the kind Sohemus told her in the fortress."

Herod grinned with demoniac fierceness, and ordered the executioners to despatch him, and left the dungeon. As soon as he reached the guard, he called the officers, and loudly declared—

"Sohemus, who has served me well, would never have made known to the queen my private orders, but where he had no right to be; therefore seize him, and directly slay him! Remember, if he escapes, your lives are forfeited."

Sohemus was seized and slain. Herod went raging to his apartment, like a glutted tiger to his lair. Salome followed him, and kneeling besought him to listen to her, for she was his injured sister.

He sternly said—

"Whence all this misery? I can hardly tell. Curses on you for not warning me before! I want no defence from you. What more do you know of this foul proceeding?"

Salome, with affected grief, rejoined—

"Sohemus passed his days with Mariamne at the fortress: it is not surprising that one so beautiful should have inspired him with unpardonable love. I fear that love was not wholly rejected; but he is gone, and so now it matters not, for he can love no more."

Herod's lips quivered at this intelligence, and his vengeance was added to by the fires of jealousy. He only asked, in a hollow voice—

"What more? what more?"

The fiend pretended to be much afflicted, and added, in a half complaining voice—

"Alas! you know I warned you from the first, that she loved you not; then I distinctly told you that the vile Mazrah had attracted her wandering thoughts: now we find the weak Sohemus was a favourite too. Ah, Herod, had my advice been followed, there would have been none of this misery. Alas! alas!"

The infatuated monster still continued to ask her for more information, and credulously trusted to the accuracy of all her artful lies, until his soul was harrowed up to a state bordering on frenzy. He summoned Ananeel, and directed him to convene the Sanhedrin on the following morning, and ordered that they should assemble in the audience-hall. During the greater part of the night, he occupied himself in arranging the order of the trial, and in preparing the accusation against his wife. He was roused from a short feverish slumber by his attendant, with the information that the hour for their assembling was at hand.

During the night Dermah had brought the children to Mariamne, at her earnest request. She kissed them, prayed over them, and with the last tears she ever shed followed them to the outer door, where the rough sentinel did obeisance, and, as the tear-drop moistened his eye, said—

" I will not stop the queen, if she will fly from this place."

She thanked him, asked his name and tribe, and returned. When Dermah came back, Mariamne threw herself on her neck, blessed and thanked her, then besought her to grant her one favour. The weeping Dermah bade her to command it. She instantly said—

" I command you to leave me and join your husband, and fly this hated, this polluted land. Dermah, when you are far away, and I am numbered with my murdered race, O, sometimes think of me, who loved you with a sister's love, and looked upon your husband as my truest friend. We shall meet again, where no deadly malice can pursue us, and where no evil can assail us. Farewell, a long, a last farewell. Ah! weep not so, my friend. I cannot weep; the stillness of despair has chilled me. Go, Dermah; obey my last command; and carry with you my grateful remembrance to Babarrah."

Dermah clung to her, and replied—

" He bade me stay with you until he gave me a signal to fly;—he has friends and fleet horses to bear us far away. There must be retribution in another life; there must be some safe refuge for the wretched to repose in. I will not weakly bid you hope for life—it is not worth your keeping. The very remembrance of your miseries would blast the blessings of all this world's prosperity. May we meet again hereafter, and, forgetful of our former woes, dwell with the blessed, and those who love us here, for ever!"

They remained locked in each other's arms until Mariamne broke the silence—

" Of my babes I dare not speak, lest all my resolution fail me. May angels guard them, and may our God forget to visit on them their father's crimes! Tell them hereafter that their mother was an injured woman, driven through

a vale of misery to destruction. Dermah, one thing weighs heavy on my heart. I have sent to see my mother, and she comes not. Ask her for her blessing on me, assure her of my innocence, beg her to forgive me for every fault and every act that fell short of my duty. And, Dermah, if she could be persuaded to fly with you, it might save her from destruction, and Herod from more deeply imbruing his hands in blood. My memory seems struggling to recall some last impressions. Ah! they come. It is now I see the completion of the greater portion of the dream I told you. Oh, it would harrow up my soul to madness to see farther—what has passed I can think of—but, O heavenly Father, cover the future with the veil of night! Dermah, pray with me; and after, I will try and sleep until my husband and his judges send for me to be condemned."

Dermah shuddered at the word; but the queen, without emotion, said—

"It will only be a mandate to waft me to regions of bliss and peace. My babes—what meant those forms in my dream? I must try and sleep, lest more horrible forebodings should assail me."

She placed herself on her couch, whispered a silent prayer, and, being exhausted, slept, while her friend watched over her.

The preparations for the trial occupied so long a time, that it was the eighth hour before the queen was summoned to appear before her judges.

Herod had been informed that crowds of adherents to Mariamne had entered the city, and were bold in expressing their belief of her innocence. He dreaded, more than all of them, the fearless Arab, and would have seized him, if he had not thought that it would be a signal for tumult; he ordered his brother Pheroras to keep close to him, and on the least disturbance to slay him. The palace was lined

with the Idumæan guards, mercenary troops occupied the adjoining streets, and the Galatians given him by Cæsar were stationed in the avenues and courts.

The high-priest Ananeel was seated on a chair of state; the priests, elders, and scribes, occupied their accustomed places; Herod on his throne appeared as the accuser of his wife; opposite to him were Alexandra, Salome, and witnesses.

Mariamne, supported by Dermah, entered the hall. She would not clothe herself in mourning garments, because she was innocent, and going to the house of joy in paradise: her dress was white; her hair, unbound, fell on her neck beneath a veil. On reaching the place destined for her, she put her hand upon her bosom, and inclined her head to the Sanhedrin. She then threw back her floating veil, as if indifferent to the scrutiny of those who thought her guilty. Her face was pale and woe-worn; her eyes moved not, but her head turned gently as she surveyed the assembly, and, for a moment, were fixed on the savage monarch, who could not bear the melancholy majesty of her look. Silence pervaded the judges and those around.

The high-priest arose, and thus addressed her—

"Mariamne, of the Asmonean race, and queen of Judæa, thou art cited before the Sanhedrin for offering the price of blood to Azahzel, to poison our lord the king, your husband: add not to your guilt, but 'give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him.'"

Mariamne looked on Herod, then raised her hands, bent her head, and in a clear unaltered voice replied—

"By the great Jehovah, I am innocent."

This declaration was recorded.

The high-priest called on the king to make his accusation. Mariamne's frame slightly shivered, and her eyelids closed for a moment; but with renovated spirit she looked

on him, until he was visibly agitated, and compelled to evade her by turning towards the judges, whom he thus addressed—

"Priests and elders of Israel,—to describe my feelings as a husband and a king, would be useless and irrelative. Had I followed the dictates of those feelings, I should not now be here the accuser of my wife. I would have repudiated and left her to mourn for her past misdeeds. She has demanded to be called before the Sanhedrin, and has in our presence solemnly declared her innocence. Alas! I would that she had given glory to our God and confessed her crime, instead of adding perjury to her attempt to murder me. She cannot be aware of the evidence against her. The Lord will not suffer such crimes to be hidden. For years she has despised me, and has been wormwood to my soul instead of an affectionate wife. Neither my glory, the happiness of the people, nor my love, have decreased her hatred, but increased it, until she tried, first, to win over to her the long-tried, faithful cup-bearer Azahzel; finding that he honoured his king, and feared the law, she tempted him with bribes to give me a potion she herself would mix. He knew the hatred that she bore towards me, and suspected that the potion was poisonous. He obtained it, kept it by him, and yesterday fell at my feet and confessed the treason. The previous conduct of the accused upheld his tale. Lest I should be precipitate, a criminal, condemned to die, was sent for, told the doubt, and promised the chance of his life to swallow this potion from the cup. He did so, the deadly mixture seized upon his vital parts, and he expired in agony."

The monarch bent his head, covered his face and groaned. The Herodians and others rent their garments, and many cursed the injured queen. She stood unmoved, with her hands crossed on her bosom. Dermah, kneeling by her

side, was scrutinising, through her tears, the fiend Salome, on whose lip played an ill-suppressed smile of exultation at the wreck of her lovely victim. Fear was portrayed on the face of the unfeeling Alexandra. The king continued—

"Azahzel is here ready to give his testimony: if more is required, the dead body of the wretch who drank the poison must pollute this hall. I could add accusations of other crimes as deadly by our law, but in mercy I forbear."

Azahzel was summoned, and the formula of the oath read to him, to which he gave the customary assent. He told the tale, in which he had been so well instructed by the vile Salome, with such minute precision and so many tears, that it almost staggered the conviction of her innocence existing in the minds of some of her friends; even murmurs were heard from many present, and the minions of the king looked towards Ananeel.

The hypocrite addressed the prisoner—

"Our law does not condemn before it hears the defence of the accused; so, I beseech thee, clear thyself of this accusation, if thou canst, before God and man."

Mariamne looked on him, and with unaltered voice replied—

"*I have spoken.*"

The effect of these solemn words, and her manner, swayed the opinions of the people, and many wept; Herod, perceiving this, grew angry, and exclaimed—

"Perjured, unfaithful, perfidious murderess, tenfold guilty of death! I call upon your family, my kindred, and my people, to curse you! Pride and vengeance have been the companions of your thoughts. I should for ever deem the wretch an enemy to God and man, who should defend you against these irrefutable proofs."

His passion almost stopped his utterance. Dermah rose, her tears were dried, and she exclaimed—

" She is innocent! these accusations are the falsehoods of her enemies, who have duped the cruel and jealous Herod."

At these words a tumult of voices filled the court, and many blades were half unsheathed. Babarrah, who commanded the soldiers, stood near the king, and called with a loud voice, that made the hall re-echo, and the stoutest hold his peace —

" Let no man unsheathe his blade before the Sanhedrin, lest the enemy should say that justice has been overborne."

He stopped for a moment; then fixing his eagle-eyes upon the incensed yet fearful monarch, added—

" The queen is innocent! Azahzel's tale is false. And, monarch, when the honour of your wife is the question, I may, without transgressing the laws of man, declare that thou hast falsely accused her, and she is chaste and faithful."

The blood for a moment flushed the cheek of the noble Mariamne; but her countenance underwent no change. Before the astonished Herod and the awed assembly had recovered their surprise, Alexandra, whose fears for her own safety had overcome natural affection and every other consideration, left her place, and rushing to her injured child, thus barbed the arrows of calumny —

" Hence, hence, perfidious woman! from the hour of your nuptials your husband has been vexed and thwarted by you. Your perjuries and infidelities have called down the vengeance of Heaven on your head, and brought you to a deserved death."

She tore her hair, and loaded her with yet viler epithets, until Dermah and the spectators raised a cry of abhorrence. The king declared his crown and honour tainted; and as soon as silence was obtained, the high-priest put the ques-

tion to the judges; and they, knowing the determination of the king, at once declared —

"*She is guilty of death!*"

Mariamne shewed no signs of fear, and seemed the only being there unmoved. Several of the judges, though they had sanctioned the condemnation, earnestly besought the king to postpone the execution of the sentence; and more than one proposed that she should be imprisoned in some distant fortress; but many demanded her immediate death. Amid this confusion she was led away.

As soon as they reached a retired part of the palace, she embraced Dermah, and said in a low, imploring voice —

"Save me one pang, by going to your husband; rely on it, he will not escape while you are here, and so I may have to answer for your lives. My *only*, my much-loved friend, leave me, or my resolution will fail me; for I shall believe that for my sake you are both sacrificed."

She imprinted one long last kiss with her cold lips, unclasped her arms, gazed on her for a moment, and saying "Farewell!" hastened to leave her. Dermah uttered an agonising cry, covered her face, and reluctantly left her forlorn friend to join her husband.

Salome followed Herod from the hall into the palace, and there urged him not to delay the execution of the sentence, unless he desired to stir up rebellion in the kingdom; since not only the people were becoming turbulent, but numbers were pouring into the city from every quarter. The king was greatly agitated, and evidently reluctant to order Mariamne to be led to death. While his mind was wavering, Sabbion appeared, and, prostrating himself, said —

"Blessed be the Lord's anointed! I have ever thought it my duty to my king to warn him of impending danger,— the Asmonean guards are ready to revolt."

These words decided him; and in defiance of the Jewish

law, which decrees that no one shall be condemned and suffer on the same day, he called for the appointed officers, and commanded them to lead her to the forum, and there to fulfil the law. One dared to say, " that it was near sunset, or the twelfth hour, and the law would not sanction the infliction of punishment by night, scarcely within the gates."

The opposition revived the monarch's rage; he smote and sent him to confinement; and, repeating the order, traversed his apartment with quick and heavy tread.

The officers entered her room, and found her there without one friend to support her at her utmost need. The slave Tezellah would have come forward, but a fierce Herodian thrust her back. They approached Mariamne, and the chief of them said, with faltering voice—

" *Daughter of death, we have received our orders.*"

She waved her hand for them to lead the way, and followed with slow and steady step.

Contrary to the usual custom, the place appointed for the execution was the forum, near the palace. In passing through the avenues, and across the courts, no friend raised a parting cry, no tear was shed; on every side were guards, and mercenary warriors, and unknown faces. She passed the gateway, and was exposed to the public gaze. Mingled sounds of blessings, curses, woes, and cries for justice, instantly arose from among the people. She crossed her hands upon her bosom, and advanced unmoved by the horrid din. When she had reached the middle of the street, beyond the palace-wall, a crowd of horsemen pressed down upon the front; at their head rode Jonathan and Reuben; on their flank appeared Babarrah, backed by the Asmonean guard. He drew his falchion, which was the preconcerted signal, and a chosen band spurred in among the crowd to surround their injured queen. Pheroras had anticipated the skilful movement, warned by the traitor Sabbion, and

in an instant the spearmen were prepared, and he rode at the brave Babarrah, and tried by a sudden thrust to pierce his bosom: the Arab had but a moment to ward off the blow, but at the same time cut the savage to the ground. The Galatians had, on the first appearance of the guard, hastened through the gateway. Babarrah saw, at a single glance, that he had been betrayed, and cried, in a voice of agony—

"All, all is lost, my brave men! save yourselves, for Mariamne's sake!"

She looked at Babarrah, and with an imploring voice distinctly exclaimed—

"O, spare the blood of my people! Come not to my rescue! Fly! for my sake, fly!"

Then turning to the officers, she said—

"Lead on!"

A serried phalanx of men, on either side, prevented her from seeing what took place, and she moved slowly forward. They soon reached the place where all her sorrows were to end.

The sun was setting amid clouds, through which its beams could not penetrate, when the lovely victim reached the spot where the executioners were ready to perform their office. She advanced to the step, where her coffin lay; with steady hand untied her veil, that fell unheeded to the ground; the braid which bound her hair unfastened with it, and her raven tresses floated over her marble neck. A merciless Herodian would have torn it off, but the executioners prevented his attempt.

Mariamne glanced on the silent crowd, covering the open space and all the terraced houses round, but spoke not; then gazed on the declining sun with an unearthly look; her lips moved as she prayed: at that moment the level beams burst through the cloudy veil, and shining on

her pallid face and snowy garments, seemed to change her to a heavenly spirit. She appeared communing with guardian angels as she gently drew away her hair, and knelt. The satellite gave the unerring blow — Mariamne's quivering body sunk into its narrow cell, and her spirit returned to God who gave it.

Then there arose—alas, too late—a cry of despair and woe, that smote the monarch's ear, and told him that the dreadful deed was done. It sounded to him like a mighty voice, that quelled all human passions, and appalled the soul. It seemed to tell him, in words beyond the power of mortals to disbelieve, that he had murdered his spotless wife! He stood and trembled, then shrieked in utter agony, and ran forth, and called aloud to bring him back his Mariamne. He met her bier, and following it his brother's corpse, still looking fierce. As if a moment's doubt flashed across his maddening brain, he tore away the covering from Mariamne's coffin, and saw her face placid and lovely, even in death; no stain had soiled it, but her tresses were clogged with gore, and matted on her bosom.

Again the loud wail of woe was heard, and he remembered that she was gone for ever. He placed his hands upon his brow, as if smitten by some unseen power; he shrieked, and rushed away, scourged by the lashes of upbraiding conscience, and with burning madness on his soul. When the tempest of his mind was lulled, he ordered his officers to prepare the minstrels and banquet, and called for Mariamne; when she came not, he repeated her name until the truth was remembered, and he again became a raving maniac. Months passed away: he left his kingdom, wandered amid the deserts, and called for her he had so foully murdered. Time and the will of Providence restored him to his reason. His transient penitence had no

foundation on which to stand; he again became a tyrant, and imbrued his guilty hands in blood, until—

The voice in Rama had been heard—
Lamentation and most bitter weeping;
The daughters of Rachel weeping for their children,
Refusing to be comforted for their children, because they were not.

Then God smote him with loathsome and horrible diseases, and astonishment of heart, and called him to the tribunal of Almighty justice.

NOTE.

Lest it should be thought that I have transgressed, without some authority, the scanty outline of the Jewish historian in his account of Alexandra's conduct to her daughter, I quote the following passages from the work of the writer who calls himself Joseph the son of Gorion :—

" Alexandra verò, illius mater, cùm ei res innotuisset, *prosiliens* exclamavit atque indignabunda Salomen regis sororem, sic allocuta est : Egredere, perfida, quæ marito tuo semper refractaria fuisti, eumque *mendaciis* et *scortationibus* tuis ad mortem adegisti : dein concitato animo ac voce sublata hæc ei ingessit maledicta."

" Fœminæ quoque aliæ multæ per fenestras et cancellos prospicientes maledictis illam ac probris affecerunt, quòd Mariamne ipsius fraude absque ullo suo merito ad mortem referetur," &c. &c.

The difference between the true and spurious Josephus I have used as I thought best. I will add the following words :—

" In dicta Josippi Epitom. p. 139, narratur, quòd Mariamna ad *forum urbis perducta ibique interfecta sit.* Cumque ad locum morti destinatum venisset, *collum denudatum præbuit* gladio satellitis regii, qui illam mandato regis interfecit."

THE END.

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